









ONE WORD MORE:

AN APPEAL

TO

THE REASONING AND THOUGHTFUL

AMONG

UNBELIEVERS.

Then said he unto me, Prophesy unto the wind! Prophesy! son of man! and say to the wind, Thus saith the LORD GOD: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live!" Ezekiel, xxxvii: 9.

BY JOHN NEAL.

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Dedication.

TO OUR DEAR CHILDREN,

I LEAVE THIS:

WITH EARNEST PRAYER,

AND A TREMBLING FAITH.

JOHN NEAL.

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ONE WORD MORE.

ALL BEGINNERS ARE CHILDREN.

‘THEN I said, Ah Lord God ! behold I cannot speak,
for I am a child.’ Jer. i : 6.

Was the plea encouraged, or listened to ? Judge for thyself, O man ! by what follows.

‘But the Lord said unto me, Say not *I am a child* ;
for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee ; and
whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak.’ Jer. i : 7.

As with him, so with all, who are set apart, and sent forth, commissioned of their Heavenly Father.

Children they must be—or they are never Sons of God, nor Prophets, nor Teachers, nor Helpers.

But in what sense are they to be children ?

‘Except ye be converted and become *as little children*’
saith our Lord and Master, ‘*ye shall not enter the kingdom of Heaven.*’

Do we understand this ? Have we weighed it ? Do we indeed believe it ?

Or this ?

‘Suffer *little* children to come unto me and forbid them not ; for of *such* is the kingdom of Heaven.’

Very little children they must have been ; for 'He took them up in his arms, and blessed them.'

Let no one hope to be excused therefore : Let no one be afraid, nor disheartened, because of littleness, or feebleness, or ignorance ; for, instead of being hindrances or disqualifications, all these, if tempered with a childlike, honest and hearty faith, humility and love, are helps and assurances. Not only are they of themselves great recommendations, if we may put our trust in the Saviour himself ; but qualifications of so high a nature as to be often, if not always, indispensable.

Be comforted therefore *ye little ones* ; be strengthened and hopeful : for, 'out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength', says the Hebrew Monarch to Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts ; or, according to Matthew, 'prepared praise.' *

Not to the Wise and Powerful of earth ; not to the Learned and the Rich ; not even to the Righteous, came he : for the Righteous are the '*whole*', and they need no physician—they want no Saviour : but to the Simple of understanding and the Helpless ; to the Unlearned and the Foolish ; to the Lowly and the Poor—in other words, to the many, and not to the few : to the suffering millions of earth, and not to the unsuffering scores, through all generations. 'For the preaching of the Cross is to them that perish *foolishness* ; but unto us which are saved, it is the *power* of God.' 1 Cor. i: 18. 'But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks *foolishness* ; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ, *the*

* Wakefield's Translation.

power of God, and the wisdom of God.' Ib. 23. 'The foolish things of the world are chosen to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the mighty.'

How the Saviour himself understood that mission: how he estimated the comparative dignity and worth of the wonders he wrought, may be safely inferred from the following passage.

'Go tell John,' he says, when asked by the two messengers, if they were to look for another—'Go tell John what ye hear and see. The blind receive sight: the lame walk: lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear: *the dead are raised—and the poor have the Gospel preached to them.*' Matt. xi: 4.

Behold the climax. The blind see; the lame walk: lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear: *the dead are raised, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them!* As if the last mentioned miracle were the greatest: as if calling the dead to life were less than preaching the Gospel to the Poor: as if, up to that hour, from the beginning of the world, the *Poor* had been overlooked or forgotten, if not by God himself, by the mightiest of God's Interpreters and Teachers: by Priest and Prophet; Lawgiver and Patriarch: as if, to say all in a word, their messages, their warnings, their denunciations and their prophecies had all been for the mighty and the few; for the Kings, and Princes, and Rulers of Earth, and to their children forever.

'Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted * * * Blessed are the poor in spirit * * * Blessed are the meek.'

The Mourning, the Poor of Spirit, and the Meek then, are the blessed. And who are the blessed, but the children of God ?

But to be *children* is not enough. We are to be as *little* children.

Because, up to a certain point, Learners are the best Teachers, and perhaps it were safe to say that the best of Teachers are always Learners—or in other words always learning.

Must it not be so, forever and ever, with Angels and Archangels ? With Cherubim and Seraphim, and with all the shining ones that help constitute the Hierarchy of Heaven ? Else why do they live forever ?

Why should there not be a system, corresponding with the Lancastrian, for spiritual teaching ? for the uppermost, as well as for the lower classes of that great Sabbath-school which God himself opened in person at the Beginning, and established forever, when ‘the morning stars sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for joy’ ?

Must we have Archangels among the regenerated, for teaching the alphabet ? Kings and Prophets, and Apostles and Martyrs, to begin with ? If they, who have undergone a spiritual transformation, are to be *as* little children, must they not do whatever they do at all, *as* little children, even to the helping of others ?

Great masters are never wanted, till they can be understood, followed and appreciated. Only those who are but a little way ahead of us are the best guides. If high up, or afar off, we are disheartened from the beginning, and after a while, forgotten, or lost sight of,

We do not require a grammarian, a lexicographer, a language-master, nor a rhetorician, for the prattler, just learning the way to its mother's heart. All their learning, and power, and labor, would be worthless. And yet, of her, while talking 'baby'; and of its little brothers and sisters, while trying to accommodate their language to his understanding, however unpalatable or unmeaning their gibberish might be to the wise above what is written, that babe is learning, hour by hour, what all the grammarians, and lexicographers, and language-masters, and rhetoricians of earth would never be able to teach a nursling. Nor would all that they know ever help that child one jot or tittle, in pleading with its mother. And if not with the mother, why should it help him in pleading with his Father? What power of language have they, compared with the lisping and stammering of that little tongue? What is their rhetoric to the rhetoric of nature? If the babe were to grow eloquent according to their notions of eloquence, what would become of the mother? Would she not fling it from her lap, and run screaming to the neighbors? And would not the Father himself turn away from what others might regard as a wonderful prayer, because unfaltering and unnatural?

Who would think of employing a field-marshall for a drill-sergeant? A Newton, a La Place, or a Kepler for teaching the multiplication-table? A Rubens, or a West, for the elements of drawing? A Handel, or a Mozart, or a Beethoven, for the alphabet of sounds? Or a great Theologian to clear up the fourth chapter of Matthew?

Beware of Teachers who have gone so far, from strength to strength ; and so high up, as to have lost the remembrance of earth, and of their first feeble totterings—their discouragements, their mistakes, their misgivings and their failures ; for how can they be expected to sympathize with Beginners, or to hold fellowship with little children ?

At best, they are but counsellors ; instead of companions, and play-fellows, and helpers : Rallying-ensigns upon the mountain-tops, about which, in the hour of darkness or dismay, the routed may gather, by climbing—and only by climbing—from the valleys below ; they are never felt, nor acknowledged, as banners hurrying to the rescue, heading the charge, or advancing side by side, and always within reach, against the great Adversary, and his embattled legions.

Beware of those who wear a heavy armor, and are always ‘travelling in the greatness of their strength.’ Seldom indeed have they any just consideration for the faint-hearted and weary, for the unarmed or the newly-harnessed, who, instead of plunging headlong into the tumult and uproar of the conflict, stand apart and afar, trembling and quaking, at the thunder of the battle, and the shouting of the captains.

The Mighty and the Wise take too much for granted. They assume too much, and they require too much. Having mounted so high upon the ladder that Jacob saw, reaching from earth to Heaven, and thronged with giant shapes, as to be no longer sensible of their own progress, though greater than ever ; they are unable to make a sufficient allowance for the songs of triumph and

exultation they hear coming up from below, over those who are but just beginning to forsake the world; and whose upward progress, for that very reason—*because* they are beginners—and *because* they are still so much nearer earth than Heaven—may be measured by themselves, and by others; by the multitude below; by the friends who are struggling with them, day after day; and by all who are only a little higher up: though not by those, who, after laboring diligently and faithfully for many a long year, have got above the clouds.

All Beginners are children. Whatever may be their age, their talents, or their learning, as Beginners, like St. Paul himself, they are only children, and must be dealt with as children. If this great simple truth, which lies at the foundation of all our knowledge, be overlooked or forgotten, our labor must be unprofitable, and our teaching vain. By assuming that Beginners know what they do not know, or that a certain order of intelligence may venture to disregard, or overleap, the elementary principles of any science—the rudiments or alphabet of any study—Learners are disheartened, or overtired, and Teachers are disqualified: and all after-explanations are misunderstood.

When Cicero grappled with Greek in his old age; and Dr. Johnson with German toward the end of his wayfaring, both began with the alphabet—like little children. There was no other way. So with Alfred, the great English Lawgiver, when he undertook the overthrow of one power, and the establishment of another among his people. He entered the service of a shepherd, he fashioned his own bows, and well nigh ruined all by

forgetting that he was ‘a little child’ and letting the cakes burn. But the Lord of Hosts being with him, that very oversight saved his life. And so too, when Peter the Great of Russia—great, according to the judgment of the world, flung aside the sceptre of a vast and powerful empire, and gathered up his kingly robes, and came down from a seat ‘high and lifted up,’ to learn the trade of a ship-carpenter, he went away into a far country, and enrolled himself among the lowly of Saadam—not as the Czar of all the Russias, but as Peter Michaeloff, a common laborer. And Gustavus Vasa, that wonder of the giant North, when he forsook the troubled earth, and went down into the darkest and deepest chambers of Dalecarlia, it was in the same spirit, and with the same hope. These mighty monarchs became ‘as *little* children.’ They began at the beginning. They were not above their business. They were teachable, trusting, patient, and submissive—not to the mighty of earth, but to the weak and the lowly. Otherwise they might never have been heard of. They were Beginners; and if they had been dealt with as any thing more, or better, how would their dark and trying apprenticeships have prepared them for the thrones they afterwards took possession of?

Hence the beauty, the wisdom, and the power of that injunction so many times repeated by the wisest, and lowliest of Teachers—Be ye as *little children*!

MIRACLES.

What is a miracle ?

Grant that man hath transgressed. Grant that a way was needed to save him from the consequences, whatever they were : then, is it not probable—is it not indeed certain—that Infinite Wisdom, and Goodness, and Power, would contrive a way, not likely to suggest itself to the understandings of men ?

If not—and regeneration were needed, of what advantage to the Universe, to Man, or to God himself, were the unsearchable wisdom, the boundless power, the unspeakable goodness, which, in their mightiest combinations, could be fathomed and foreseen, if not forestalled by Man ?

And if millions of ages were to pass, before the children of men should be allowed to see enough, or to understand enough, to engage their approbation, why should they be troubled ? Has it not been ever so from the first ?

From the first, were not laws established by the Builder of the universe, which, after thousands of years, are but beginning to be understood by the wisest of mankind ? Tolerated age after age, though with many a misgiving, by the devout and hopeful, and borne with by Philosophers, not because their beautiful adaptation was felt, and their fitness acknowledged, but because they could not be helped, they are now beginning to be

understood, approved and justified ; and all the phenomena that puzzled our great fathers, in the shape of anomalies, or exceptions, are fast arranging themselves among the clearest manifestations of unapproachable wisdom and foresight ; until much that in other days perplexed the ‘undevout astronomer’, and seriously troubled the mightiest of God’s worshippers on earth ; and many a seeming oversight ; have come to be regarded with deep thankfulness and awe, as part of a self-sustaining, self-adjusting and self-compensating system, whereby the unchangeable instincts of the universe are enabled to perpetuate themselves.

May it not be so hereafter ?

God’s ways are not our ways. Hence we are called upon to believe, *because* we cannot understand.

To understand, we must be as gods ; but little children may believe.

And why should we complain of this ? or try to understand the conclusions that must follow—as if our distinguishing attribute—reason—were dethroned, or affronted ?

Had we been called upon to understand—instead of believing—we might indeed have wondered at the apparent unreasonableness of our Father.

But because, instead of requiring what we know to be impossible, so long as we are not omniscient, he has been satisfied to require of us only what a little child may do, there are those who will not even try to obey him.

What he is content with demanding of us here, as proof that we are willing to be happy on his terms hereafter, is just what we are all doing every day and every

hour, without a sense of degradation or self-reproach, in the business of the world. Think of this. How little do we understand of all that we believe upon the representations of others, and because of our faith in man! Shall we have less faith in God? Shall we take nothing upon trust of the incomprehensible Jehovah, who is 'past finding out,' when we are always taking so much upon trust, at every step of our pilgrimage here, of the feeblest, and the falsest, and the shallowest of the sons of men!

What know we of the feelings, and hopes, and wishes of little children, beyond what we are enabled to gather from the half-obliterated, or long-forgotten experience of our own childhood? Yet we believe them, where we have to depend altogether upon what they tell us, and act upon that belief, in questions of life or death.

Our property, our health, our happiness and our character—our very lives—we put in jeopardy every hour, not only without understanding, but without even wishing to understand, what may be called the very ground-works of our trust. Who would venture to cross a bridge; to go on board a ship; to enter a rail-car; to take any drug—or go to law, under any circumstances, if the result were to depend, not upon his faith and hope, or trust, but upon his knowledge, or understanding?

Is God unreasonable, to require thus much, at least, if no more, of his creatures?

Well then, *Faith* we must have—some faith; but how much, and of what kind? Or in other words, with how little faith may we hope to be saved?—for we can never have too much for safety, nor too much for happiness.

That there is a minimum—if not a maximum, without which there can be no well-grounded hope: a faith so small, that if it were lessened one jot or tittle, it would be no longer a saving faith, seems clear. It is the teaching of our Saviour himself; and the Scriptures overflow with illustrations to prove, that if this faith be of the right kind, it may be sufficient, though very little of itself—even less than ‘a grain of mustard seed.’

The question therefore with the multitude seems to be, not—How much faith is required for safety; but how little? or what is the least possible quantity we can hope to get along with?

Having heard that the devils believe and tremble, and believing that they who do no more, do well, they are satisfied, and never trouble themselves about what *kind* of faith is required.

And yet, if they had all the faith of the dethroned legions of lost Cherubim and Seraphim in the world of wo, how would it avail them? theirs being not the kind of belief required, or they would not have been lost.

Among those who appear to have had this problem under consideration of late, in our land, is the Rev. Theodore Parker; a man of great learning and of great reputation, as a thinker and a reasoner; a man too, of a sincere and blameless life, who can have no interest, one would suppose, in deceiving himself, or in misleading others; and the conclusion to which he has arrived would be, to say the least of it, rather alarming, were it not that others, like Strauss and Trench, his prototypes, have acknowledged the same unbelief—and outlived the acknowledgment.

‘*I do not believe*’ says the Rev. gentleman, after searching the Scriptures for thirty years, and preaching Christ crucified, I know not how long—but long enough certainly to put him upon his defence, if he were self-deceived, or a deceiver of others, for so large a portion of the whole time allowed man for the investigation of truth—‘*I do not believe*’—and here he might have stopped, as having written his own epitaph—‘*I do not believe there ever was a miracle, or ever will be. Every where I find law—the constant mode of operation of the Infinite God.*’

Supposing there to be no mistake in the language—and I give it from a discourse lately published, with his name to it, a copy of which I have long been waiting for, and have not been able to find—borrowing what follows from the quotations that have just appeared in the Boston Daily Advertiser, and in the Puritan Recorder, where they could not have escaped his attention, if garbled, or dislocated, or untrue—then, he must be prepared to follow Strauss, who holds that miracles are downright impossibilities, and maintain that there can be no such thing as a miracle, and therefore, that God himself cannot, or will not, under any conceivable circumstances, nor in any way, either in person or otherwise, perform a miracle.

For if he may do it in one case, why not in another? And who shall be the judge of its necessity? God himself?—or the Rev. Theodore Parker?

When he reads of the resurrection therefore—of the prophecies and their fulfilment—he must do one of these three things. There can be no escape.

He must deny the alleged fact—and put the truthfulness of the record in issue:

Or, account for the alleged fact, and explain it by the *law*, which he professes to *find* every where—‘the *constant* mode of operation of the infinite God’:

Or—failing to do this, and refusing to receive it for a miracle, however mysterious or wonderful it may be, and however contrary to the known laws of nature, and above human power, he must give it another name, and so resolve the whole question into a dispute about words.

Does he mean to deny the alleged fact; and the truthfulness of the record? Then, why not say so; and let us understand clearly, that his faith, whatever it may be, is not founded upon the Scriptures; nor on the trustworthiness of the witnesses.

The blind see—the dumb speak—the deaf hear—the lame walk—the dead are raised, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them—that very Gospel which he cannot believe. There are signs and wonders in Heaven and in Earth—foretellings and fulfilments—and the Son of a carpenter becomes the Lawgiver of a World: the Teacher of a new and strange faith, alike unpalatable and unwelcome; which faith, without help from the wise and powerful, and against the long established usages, and settled convictions, not only of Idolaters and Pagans, but of the Hebrews themselves—God’s chosen people—goes on, age after age, in a career of almost uninterrupted, though unostentatious triumph, burning its way onward through the darkness of Heathenism, till nation after nation are led to abandon the Gods of their fathers, with all their groves and temples and

altars and worship, forever ; and it threatens to over-spread the whole earth—and with what ? With light, and life, and everlasting truth ? Or with a mischievous and unwholesome delusion ?

Can there be a greater miracle than the Saviour himself—give what definition you please to the word ? Yet the Rev. gentleman professes to believe in the Saviour, as a *Teacher of truth*—and upon the testimony too of this very record, and of these very witnesses, who were either dishonest, or so grossly deceived, as to render their testimony of no value, if they are unworthy of our belief, when they testify to what are called the miracles of their Lord and Master.

Have we not the very same witnesses, and the very same testimony, whether good or bad, to the doings of Jesus, that we have to his existence upon earth ? And what know we of his wonderful character, but from their evidence to his unexampled gentleness, and sweetness, and truthfulness, and wisdom and foresight, and patience and lowliness, and power with God ?

And yet the Rev. gentleman would have us believe that *he* believes in some at least of the doings and teachings of the Lord Jesus, and in the character he bears, upon the testimony of these impeached and greatly dishonored witnesses ; for he says of the Saviour, ‘ He is my best historic ideal of human greatness ; not without errors, nor without the stain of the times.’ But again I ask—what can he know of Jesus himself, or of his errors, but from the testimony of these very men, whom he refuses to believe, when they testify as eye-witnesses to certain doings of Jesus, which the Rev. Theodore

Parker, being himself a Believer, undertakes to say were impossible, or uncalled for, and never in fact happened.

If any part of all that is recorded in the Scriptures, which if they are not the Scriptures of Truth, are the Scriptures of Untruth, be untrue—substantially untrue, that is ; for nobody will deny that there may be literal errors in copying, and errors of translation, where historical allusions are made—as by Isaiah—sometimes in the character of a prophet, and sometimes in that of a witness or a reporter, accommodating his language to the people as we do now, when we speak of the sun rising and setting, though the very children about us know that it does neither ; which allusions may have been misunderstood ; or the same type may have been employed at different times, in different senses—then, who shall say what part is true ? Will they who differ so much upon all other questions, be likely to agree upon this ? And if they do not agree, who shall decide between them ? and what shall become of the Record ?

In all cases, and in every case, the true question is not whether a given act be possible or impossible—for that were to prejudge the whole subject, and make every man's knowledge or experience, or rather, his want of knowledge and experience, the only standard of truth ; since what *he* did not believe to be possible, it would not be possible to prove to *him* : but whether, all things considered, the witnesses are competent and trustworthy? neither beside themselves, nor grossly deceived ; so that when they declare, as eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses, that a given act was done, we cannot help believing that

they mean to tell the truth, and, consequently, that they believe what they testify to, miracle or no miracle.

But perhaps you require other and greater evidence of a miracle, than of that which is no miracle. And yet so far as human testimony is concerned, why should you do this? Are you not unreasonable? for you can have no higher evidence than the highest; and that you have here; since the witnesses are acknowledged to have had the best of opportunities; to have been both honest and capable, corroborating one another at every step, in every material point, as none but honest witnesses could do, and living and dying in their belief; and since one of the greatest miracles they testified to, the dispersion of the Jews, following the destruction of Jerusalem—foretold by the Saviour, if the witnesses are to be believed—has been authenticated by a standing fulfilment, from that day to this.

What other, or better evidence could there be, than we now have, to this and other miracles? Have we not, as a matter of simple truth, all the evidence that miracles are capable of? Granting their truth as declared, how otherwise could they be proved to the after-generations of mankind, than by the very testimony we have?

It is rather late in the day for personal investigation; and if it were otherwise, we should remember that there were eye-witnesses to the very miracles in question, who did not believe; and that among those of our Lord's immediate disciples and followers, who saw the miracles wrought, and must have believed them therefore, unless they disbelieved their own senses, and themselves, there were those who did not believe *Him*; nor did they

understand his teaching, till their eyes were opened anew, and their hearts burned within them, under a fresh anointing; although, if the record be trustworthy for any purpose whatever, some of these very witnesses died in the faith, and sealed their testimony with their blood.

*If we are to believe at all, therefore, it must be upon the testimony of others; of others, long since gone to their account; and therefore, upon evidence which may have been falsified, just as it may now be counterfeited to some extent, for sustaining the false miracles of our day, in the Roman Catholic, or Mormon churches. And what then? Because there *may be* some untruth, are we to believe there is no such thing as truth? Because we are not omniscient, and are not always able to distinguish between truth and falsehood, are we to believe nothing?*

But says Mr. Parker, ‘I try all things by the human faculties.’

Therefore: unless the plan devised by Jehovah, ‘the infinite God,’ for the salvation, or the restoration of mankind, happens to coincide—as it probably would not—with the views and opinions of the Rev. Mr. Parker, he would have nothing to do with it. His ‘human faculties’ not being satisfied with its reasonableness or adaptation—with its comprehensiveness, or fitness—it would be *unreasonable* to expect his co-operation.

And what he claims for himself, he would of course grant to others; and the result would be, that every follower of such faith would require the same careful adaptation to *his* ‘human faculties,’ whatever they

might be, great or small, enlightened or otherwise; and by claiming to withhold assent, wherever there happened to be a difference of opinion between God Almighty and himself, would in fact assume to legislate for the Universe, and to review the Administration of Jehovah.

And upon what plea, would he do this, whether a great or a little man, and whether his understanding were benighted or luminous? Upon the plea—put into downright English—that the Lord God Omnipotent, could not possibly have other views or purposes, or modes of action, here or hereafter, than just such as might be guessed out by the feeblest of his creatures. And, inasmuch as no two human beings were ever so much alike as to be identical, and to have but one soul, one conscience, or one judgment between them—it would follow, that the infinite Jehovah would not be one and the same God, forever and ever, to the children of men, but nine hundred millions of Gods—more or less—with a correspondent multiplication of purposes and views—to every generation; or about every thirty years in the history of mankind.

And this too, be it remembered, not in shadow, but in substance; not, in matters of speculative opinion, or guess-work, about the unfathomable and unknowable, where men, because they are unlike, and because they differ among themselves, are encouraged to differ; for if all entertained precisely the same opinions, there would be an end, not only of language, but of reasoning, and the interchange of thought would be no more; but a wholly different God, in the distinguishing and essential attributes of his character: so that the command,

published with the ‘blast of unseen trumpets, long and loud,’ at Sinai, instead of being—‘Thou shalt have no other Gods but me,’ might be understood to mean, Thou shalt have legions of Gods—to every man a God—to every woman a God—to every child a God, forever and ever; and to each, according to his heart’s desire; varying in character to suit the wishes of all.

But again—for we are to be charitable; to deal justly and to love mercy—it may be that we have misunderstood the gentleman; it may be that he does believe in something; for he says, ‘I am *ready to believe*’—as if being ready to believe were the same as believing—‘I am ready to believe that Jesus taught, as *I think*’—observe the language here—‘as *I think*—eternal torment, the existence of a devil, and that he himself, would ere long come back in the clouds of Heaven.’ But, he adds, ‘I do not accept these things on his authority. I try all things by the human faculties’—that Areopagus from which there is no appeal, and which every man has enthroned within himself; leaving us to infer that he does *accept these things*, and what is more, upon the testimony which he tramples under foot, when other purposes are to be accomplished: What these things are which he ‘*accepts*’, he does not say; and though he declares himself ‘ready to believe’, we are left to guess what; whether it be the ‘things’ that Jesus taught, or only that Jesus taught such things.

Now this I take to be hardly fair. Yet upon the supposition that he meant to acknowledge, and not conceal his opinions, when they are printed and published with his name at full length on the title page; it may

be that, instead of denying, he might be disposed to admit an alleged fact or occurrence—that of the resurrection, for example—for he certainly *appears* to believe that there was an historical personage bearing the name of Jesus Christ, if nothing more; in which case, to justify the position he holds, the reverend gentleman must account for and explain that alleged fact or occurrence—the resurrection for example—by the operation of that law—that *constant* law, which he professes not only to believe in, but to ‘*find*’ every where.

If he can always do this, then is he Omniscient; and if he cannot always do this, then, whenever he fails, he must content himself with giving that alleged fact another name—as if that would change its character. To him, and Strauss the Rationalist, and to them that believe in both, it may be only a puzzle or a phenomenon; a mystery or a wonder—a sort of exception, or anomaly: but a *miracle* it cannot be: Because why? Because a miracle is a departure from, and contrary to that law, which not only *is* every where, but which the Reverend gentleman professes to *find* every where: as if God himself could have no secrets from Mr. Theodore Parker, and his prototype—David Frederic Strauss.

But is not this a clear begging of the question? that abominable thing, which, under the name of *petitio principii*, all just reasoners hate?

Is it not substantially assuming and maintaining, that God *cannot* suspend the operation of any natural law—because he cannot?

Or that he *would not*, under any conceivable circumstances—because he would not?

Yet worse: To say that 'I do not believe there ever was a miracle, or ever will be', because I find every where a constant law of the Almighty Lawgiver against it; in other words, to say that I do not believe a thing because it is impossible; and that it is impossible, because the constant law of God is against it, is not only a begging of the question, but reasoning in a circle, and only to be matched by the proposition of George Colman the younger that

'What's impossible can't be,
And never—never comes to pass.'

Nor does the absurdity stop here: for the man who ventures to say that there never was, and never can be, a deviation from the laws of nature, assumes thereby to say what all the laws of nature are, in all cases, however complicated, and however comprehensive; and whether swift or slow in their operations; whether instantaneous, or needing ages upon ages for their development. He measures himself with Jehovah; and not only undertakes to limit his power, but to foreknow and foretell what HE *must* do, or not do, under every possible combination of circumstances.

But perhaps the reverend gentleman would entrench himself behind a new definition. This would be safer on the whole, than giving a new name to the alleged fact; so long at least as he claims to be a Teacher of the Gospel, and therefore a Believer.

What then is to be understood by a miracle? By Dr. Johnson it is defined to be 'a wonder: something above human power'.

Then, the fly that is now crawling over my paper, and the very quill I am writing with, are miracles, for both are above human power.

Spinoza, while he denies much of what the Rev. Mr. Parker believes, or seems to believe, defines a miracle to be a 'rare event, happening according to some laws that are unknown to us': whereby it would appear that a sudden rise of the sea, the ebbing and flowing of a fountain, or a meteoric shower, were downright miracles to that philosopher; being beyond all question, rare events, and happening by some laws that are unknown to us.

Dr. Wardlaw, at one time, calls it a 'suspension, or violation of the laws of nature'—and nothing more: *therefore* all phenomena are miracles, and must continue to be miracles till they choose to explain themselves, and we are acquainted with the law which was neither violated nor suspended: though at another time, after weighing the question in another and a higher atmosphere, he introduces a new element, and avers that 'every genuine miracle is a divine attestation': for, he might have added, every divine attestation is of itself, and must be, a miracle.

And this beautiful and comprehensive definition corresponds with Bentley's—'effect above human or natural power, performed *in attestation of some truth.*'

Would Mr. Parker deny that there may be effects above human or natural power?—Of course not. Then if he accepts this, or any other generally received theological definition, he must hold that such effects, have never been, will never be, and can never be produced

by God himself, either directly or indirectly, ‘in attestation of any truth.’ If so, why not say as much, in so many words?

It cannot be that, like some others, we hear of, he understands the word itself, to involve a contradiction in terms. If so, and he would content himself like Strauss, with maintaining that God cannot do what is impossible with God himself, there would be no great mischief in the preposition, whatever we might think of its reasonableness, or usefulness.

But no. The reverend Mr. Parker must be too much in earnest, and too severe a logician, for such trifling.

There remains then, so far as I can see, but one other hypothesis, for explaining the language employed by him, in recording his unbelief.

It may be—for others have so understood him—that all he means to say is, that no human power, *of itself*, can ever thwart, change or suspend the laws of the universe; or modify that fixed and ‘constant’ law which he finds every where; and from which he *seems* to think there can be no deviation, either with or without God’s leave, or help. If so, and he would but say as much, there would be an end of the controversy; for no believer in miracles, however large his faith, would ever be likely to say that they could be wrought by man, without God’s help, or against his will.

To say that he does not believe this, therefore, is to say nothing against miracles, but to leave the whole question just where he found it.

And to say with Bentley, that a miracle is something beyond human power is no definition at all: nor does it

help the matter to add ‘performed in attestation of some truth,’ unless we say what kind of truth; for the rising of the sun every day is beyond human power, in attestation of the truth that God has pre-appointed his daily journey. It must be a new truth, of a moral or religious character: or the miracle would be wasted. Islands may rise up from the great deep—and mountains may sink, in attestation of the truth of God’s power, but unless it be coupled with some new moral teaching, it wants the essential character of what is understood by a miracle.

But a miracle, in the view of Mr. Theodore Parker, may be only a suspension of, or deviation from, the *known* law of nature: that ‘certain law’ which he finds every where—and this he cannot believe in, happen what may, with, or without God’s help, or leave.

But the *known* laws of nature are always changing with the progress of our discoveries; and therefore, if the definition were complete, that which would have been a miracle in the time of our Saviour, might be no miracle now; and that which would be a miracle now—as being against the *known* laws of nature—might be no miracle hereafter: and miracles would be multiplied in direct proportion to our ignorance of the laws of nature; and the more we knew, the less we should believe.

And such is undoubtedly the fact with many—and perhaps with the reverend gentleman himself. And why?—Because the definition is faulty; for what are the *known* laws of the material Universe, within which, all these deviations that are denominated miracles must occur, compared with the *unknown*?

A miracle must be a deviation not only from the known laws of nature—but from the unknown—from all laws, whether known or not: in other words, an impossibility with God himself, to justify the belief that there never was, and never can be, such a thing.

That fire will burn—that water will quench fire—that all bodies gravitate, are among the known laws of nature from the first; and yet, age after age, qualifications and exceptions are multiplying, till we find that fire does not always burn—being but a luminous vapor like the will-o'-the-wisp, under some phases; that water instead of quenching, feeds and exasperates a large fire, being instantly decomposed and converted into the hottest flame; and that the great unchangeable, overmastering and universal law of gravitation, which binds the whole Universe together, may be suspended by the operation of a little dust—or a pinch of magnetic ore.

There was a time, when all that is now happening every day, happened *first*. Then, where was the law which the reverend gentleman professes to find every where? The law comes of repetition—does it not? What know we of any law, but by inference drawn from its continued operation, with or without intervals? But we are the creatures of a day: and there may be cycles and epicycles, and changes and chances, following pre-appointed paths, of a circumference so vast, that all the laws we are now acquainted with, may turn out to be only exceptions to another, and a higher law. The calculating machine of professor Babbage followed a constant '*known*' law, through one hundred millions of combinations, and then deviated, and another '*known*' law

prevailed, which, after continuing through twenty-seven hundred and sixty-one terms, gave place to another and yet another, which were not only unknown, but wholly unsuspected, and therefore unprovided for, till they came forth, self-generated as it were, by the kindling revolutions of the machine.

A wonder, by repetition, ceases to be wonderful. That occurrence therefore, which, when it first happened, was in truth a miracle—being contrary to the known laws of nature, might cease to be a miracle, by mere repetition—just as the ebb-and flow of the sea, and the rising and setting of the sun are no miracles now, whatever they were at first, before the law was understood, whereby they are accounted for; and for that reason, are no longer fitted for doing the office, or supplying the place of a miracle, in the administration of Jehovah.

When the lightning was brought down from the skies by the conjurations of Franklin—how did it differ from the fire that certain of our Lord's followers have always wanted to bring down to earth, for the destruction, or help, of Unbelievers? And yet, if it should fall at their bidding, it would be a miracle, because obeying the *unknown* law; while if it obeyed him, it would be no miracle, the law being *known*.

The first murderer that opened his eyes after death, and glared upon the witnesses round about him, and gesticulated fiercely, at the bidding of Galvani, was but obeying a newly discovered law: but how was it, with the dead man restored to life by touching the bones of Elisha? He was obedient in death to the *unknown* law, which neither Galvani, nor the reverend Theodore Parker

himself, would be able to explain, and therefore disbelieve.

The Balloon, the Telegraph, the Daguerreotype, the wonders of Animal Magnetism, or Phrenology, of Chloroform, or Homœopathy, or Hydropathy, might have answered all the purposes of a miracle, ages ago, if the secret had been kept:

While, on the other hand, though the sun were stayed on his journey through the heavens—the sea rolled backward—the firmament covered with sudden darkness at noon-day—and the dead raised by the stretching forth of a mortal hand; yet if another and another were enabled to do the same things, for another purpose, and a law were discovered to account for such awful phenomena, they would instantly cease to be miracles—being no longer fitted for the office of miracles. They would not even be received for the result of incantations, any more than telegraphic messages are now.

Of itself, what is so wonderful as language—whether spoken or written?—visible thought?—audible wishes?—articulate hopes and fears?—unquenchable and everlasting transports, or secret emotions? never breathed aloud to the ear of mortal; yet echoed and re-echoed, age after age, among the generations that go by the luminous record—arbitrary signs upon paper or parchment—although the author may have been forgotten, for hundreds, or thousands of years.

But for language, the world might as well have been a desert, or given up to the beasts that perish: for of what worth were the grandest thoughts—a pyramid, or an empire—the hope of hereafter, a vision, or a prophecy

—if uncommunicated, unweighed, unshared, or stifled ? After a little time, the pyramids are but forgotten heaps —the mightiest empires but shadows. And what were all the past—and all the future—but for the miraculous gift of a language that may be understood by the *eyes*? Yet, being a familiar wonder, it is unheeded, or overlooked.

‘ And what is LANGUAGE ? Language is the power,
 Whereby, as with the arrowy light of Him,
 The broad brave Sun, that flashes through the sky
 Uninterrupted glory, THOUGHT goes forth
 From mind to mind, flash after flash forever :
 At first, a little fountain bubbled up,
 Within the desert or the wilderness,
 The outlet for a mine of wealth and power,
 Ten thousand times more precious than the earth
 Burning with diamonds and glittering ore,
 That Man, short-sighted Man—would perish for :
 A treasury of Thought, and speech : Anon,
 It filtered forth, and ran a flashing brook—
 A Streamlet then—a River—then a Sea :
 Behold it now ! It overspreads the earth.’ *

To bring the question to a direct issue, however : Suppose the reverend gentleman, who does not believe there ever was, or ever will be a miracle, were eye-witness to a resurrection from the dead, or what appeared to be such, at the bidding of our Saviour himself—that of Lazarus, for example—what would he do ? What would he say, to be consistent with himself ?

Would he deny the fact as it appeared, and stultify himself by giving the lie to his own senses ? Would he try to explain the appearance by some acknowledged

* Written for Greene’s Grammar, in 1840.

natural law; like Strauss, or Trench, or Paulus? Or would he admit his inability, and try to get off, by saying that miracles are impossibilities: and that, although he could not find the law, still there must be a law, if he only knew where to look for it, which would account for the whole.

The fact, or occurrence, whether explained, or unexplained, must have a name. Would explanation change its real character, so long as the law was not known, or understood?

Adjusted by the definition of the day, every new thing is a miracle, if unrepeated; being contrary, so far as we are acquainted with them, to the known laws of nature. When something happens, which to your knowledge never happened before—I do not say which never happened before to your knowledge—for such events are happening every day: but something so strange that you take it upon yourself to say that you believe it never happened before, would it not be to you a wonder?—a mystery?—or a phenomenon, till you understood the law? And if you failed to discover that law, after a long continued and diligent search, why refuse to call it a miracle? To you, it is a miracle; if you accept the definition.

But you could not do this, and be consistent, if your disbelief in miracles, whether past or future, is founded upon a knowledge of that law which Mr. Parker ‘*finds* every where’—as if there could be no law, which he has not found—‘the *constant* mode of operation of the infinite God.’

Were David Hume alive to-day, and the sun should appear to stop, at the bidding of a mortal, he would

undoubtedly deny the fact—and call the appearance a deception. But if the same thing were repeated the next day, and the next, he would begin to believe—he could not help it—though he might not be able to account for the appearance, or the fact, and would be sure to say it was no miracle. And to him, whether it were a truth, or only an appearance, or a delusion, it would be no miracle—it would be *functus officio*—its virtue would be gone out of it, and it would therefore furnish no evidence, no corroboration to his mind; while, to the honest believer, it would be a miracle, and answer all the purposes of a miracle, in either case, if worthily employed, and for authentication.

At one and the same moment therefore, a transaction may be a miracle to A, and no miracle to B. Without faith, a hopeful, earnest, childlike faith, it would be absolutely worthless, however wonderful in itself; while to him, who had faith, much less would serve all the purposes of a miracle.

An eclipse, foretold to a barbarian, might do more toward fixing his belief, than a stopping of the sun at noonday; just as a silver tooth-pick aimed at a South-Sea Islander, who had seen a chief tumble overboard after the discharge of a pocket pistol, would be likely to impress him, where a two-and-forty pounder loaded with grape to the muzzle, with a lighted match swinging over it in the air, might give him no uneasiness. Having no experience, what is there for him to be afraid of?

Even the Saviour himself was not ashamed to acknowledge that he did not many mighty works among a certain people, because he *could* not, on account of their

unbelief: thereby intimating that, for mighty works, or wonders, to be worth doing, there must be co-operation with God on the part of Man.

To say that the faithless, or unwilling, are to be convinced of any truth, by the exhibition of God's power, is to say what is contradicted by every day's experience, and what every body knows to be false. Yet more: it implies a contradiction in terms. Volunteers are not impressed: and men are not *obliged* to choose the better part.

Can it be supposed that they who refused to believe in Jesus of Nazareth, would have done so, if they had been willing to believe in his mighty works? Must not he, who believes in a miracle—in what he himself calls a miracle, and accepts for a miracle, must he not believe what follows? for he who does what we honestly believe to be above, or beyond the power of unassisted Man, does that which puts a stop to all questioning forever, teach what he may, unless we are ready to acknowledge that miracles, not lying wonders, but downright miracles, may be wrought by the Powers of darkness, or by Lucifer, the son of the morning. Such at least would be the inferences of most people, I apprehend, though there might be no necessary correspondence between the power manifested, and the thing proved, or the truth published.

After all, however, the question is not so much what a miracle is, nor whether a certain act was the result of a miraculous or superhuman power, as whether the witnesses are to be believed, and whether the narrative be truthful.

For even, allowing that all the mighty works mentioned, were the result, not so much of miraculous power, as of greater knowledge—a more intimate acquaintance with the mysteries of nature—still if we would preserve a shred or patch of the Bible from the assaults of the Unbeliever, we must continue to believe that all the facts happened as they are set forth, explain them as we may: that Lazarus for example was dead, when he was called to come forth, and that the deaf, the blind, the palsied, and the possessed, were all what they pretended to be. And then, what would it avail the Scoffer and the Unbeliever, if he were able to show clearly and beyond all question, that these wonders were wrought from beginning to end, not in opposition, but in obedience, to long-established natural laws, known to the Saviour, and to nobody else? Would not such exclusive knowledge, of itself, be sufficient to prove all that the Believer would ask for him? Would it, on the whole, be less wonderful that he, a poor carpenter, at the age of thirty, should know more of the hidden mysteries of nature than all the rest of mankind, from the beginning of the world up to this hour, than that he should have been miraculously helped from on high?

Yet further. All possibilities, and *therefore*, all future discoveries, inventions and combinations, all wonders and all phenomena, have always existed—in *posse*, if not in *esse*—to borrow a significant law-phrase; and therefore, so long as any fact is received for a miracle, and acknowledged for a miracle, it performs all the functions of a miracle; and the great purpose of God being thereby accomplished, one fact may be as good as another;

although, instead of being a deviation from, it may be altogether in correspondence with, not the *known*, but the *unknown*, and long-after discovered laws of nature.

And therefore it is, that false prophecies, and lying wonders, and counterfeit miracles, have so abounded from the first.

And the distinction between the true and the false would seem to be this. True miracles are the result of unknown laws; false miracles of known laws. He therefore, who can persuade others, no matter how, that known laws are not known, may always work a lying wonder, so far as they are concerned. But as counterfeits prove realities—just as shadows do substances—every false miracle is a witness for true miracles.

We must not be astonished, however, that among those who are called inquisitive, strong-minded, original thinkers, there should be so much of cloud and darkness abiding, upon this great question.

They lack the believing element, to begin with. Lacking faith, a hearty honest faith, and a meek desire to know the truth, come what may of it, they lack every thing that would qualify them for reasoning about a miraculous power.

Time was when I, myself, used to reason, and honestly too, as I then thought, after the following fashion.

We are so constituted for the business of life, that if we saw a miracle wrought in our very presence, we could not believe it: We should sooner discredit our own senses, and believe some fearful deception had been practised upon our untried faith; or that we ourselves, were laboring under some strange hallucination. And

not being able to believe upon the evidence of our own senses, how could we believe upon the testimony of others, or secondary evidence ?

But in so reasoning I overlooked the following considerations.

1. If there ever was a miracle, it must have been capable of proof in some way : and must therefore have carried its own evidence with it ; evidence to some, if not to all that were witnesses : in other words, if miracles were wanted in the administration of the Universe, they would of course be miracles, and not counterfeits, nor delusions, nor capable of being counterfeited : and must therefore prove themselves.

2. Although our senses are *among* the best of witnesses, they are not always *the best* ; else the feats of jugglers would not so astonish us ; and we should not be so frequently cheated by our eyes, and ears, and touch —perhaps the most reliable of our senses : for smell and taste are seldom fixed and clear enough, to satisfy our understandings. There is therefore a better and a higher evidence ; that which is the result of reasoning and comparison : the careful, conscientious and solemn adjudication of the Soul itself—that enthroned Areopagus—from which there is no appeal, but to the Sovereign of the Universe—upon all testimony—whether of the senses, or of the understanding.

3. We have not a secondary and inferior, but a primary, and greatly superior mass of accumulated, corroborative and fortifying evidence, to most of the miracles recorded in the Scriptures, amounting, in my judgment, *to all the proof that miracles are capable of* :

and therefore, to all the proof we could reasonably expect, or wish for: and about all that our understandings, constituted as we are, would be capable of weighing or estimating, without miraculous help from above: for, if one rose from the dead, we might question the reality of what we saw, or supposed we saw; and believe ourselves asleep, or dreaming, or disordered, or in some way deceived, if not imposed upon: and evidence moreover, which eye-witnesses to those very miracles, with a very few exceptions, had not.

For example: we have a fulfilment of the prophecies, where they had not. We have the destruction of Jerusalem, and the continued dispersion of the Jews for eighteen hundred years. We have the life, and in a few cases, the death of the chief actors and witnesses, after they had been allowed time enough to recover from their delusion, if delusion there were; and so far as we know, or have any reason to believe, not one of the whole, not even Judas, ever thought of contradicting himself at last, or of unsaying what he had acknowledged by his companionship; but lived and died in the faith, under sufferings and trials, disappointments and temptations—for they certainly did not expect the death of their Lord and Master, nor understand, nor believe, on that point—of which we, in our days of untroubled Christian strength, and hope, and safety, can have no just conception.

Above all, we have this, which they had not—*this*, the crowning proof, which those who were sent forth to preach the Gospel to the uttermost ends of the Earth had not—eighteen hundred years of patient faith and

obedient hope, under all discouragements, and through all changes, among the Apostles and Martyrs, of every nation, kindred and tongue; and eighteen hundred years of uninterrupted, if not of unqualified triumph.

Instead of having less reason for believing therefore, than the Apostles themselves had, have we not absolutely more? Have we not, in addition to all their testimony, confirmed by their lives, and sealed by their deaths, and so far as we know, or have reason to believe, neither contradicted, nor explained away, so long as it was capable of contradiction or explanation, that testimony reduced to writing, collated and compared, together with all that has happened since, for corroboration?

Let no man try to persuade himself, therefore, that if he had lived among the Jews, or the Gentiles, of that day, and been permitted to see with his own eyes, and to hear with his own ears, the wonders we are told of, in the Great Book, he would have been among the followers of the Lord Jesus.

Not all believed—not many indeed. There were not only unbelieving Pharisees, but unbelieving Thomases, and Peters, and Johns, among the eye and ear-witnesses of these very miracles.

No: He who would not believe now, after well considering the whole question, and the awful consequences of unbelief, arising from neglect, or stubbornness, or pride of opinion, or perverted powers, may be very sure that he would not believe—nay, that he could not—though one should rise from the dead.

Were a miracle to happen before your face, you would believe, you think. But why? Are you unlike the tens

of thousands who would not, and did not, believe their own eyes in the time of our Saviour? for if they had believed, they would have been converted, and the ‘mighty rushing wind’ would have entirely overswept Judea.

Were a miracle repeated in your presence, you, and others about you, eye-witnesses, would be very likely to believe; and—after it had grown familiar to all—all would believe, you say. But believe what? That it was a miracle? No, indeed—but that it was no miracle: or, that ‘there never was, and never would be, a miracle.’

The first morning was a miracle—the first night another. Are they so now? And if not, why not? Has their character changed, or only ours?

Ours, if we may believe God himself. Then, all that we need for believing, is, to be carried back to the first day of Creation—or, in other words, to be restored to our first estate. And this we may have done for us, if we truly desire it. We have only to become as little children, and the change is complete, and our faith becomes a part of our being, the holiest instinct of our better nature.

By refusing to believe with our limited experience, until we understand ‘all mystery’; in other words, till that which was wonderful is no longer so, and we know so much of ‘God’s constant law’, that we are astonished at nothing—and believe nothing that requires faith, what in sober truth do we undertake to abide by? Nothing else than the infinite and amazing foolishness of David Hume, who maintained in fact, though by a formula of his own, that we understand all the laws of Nature, together

with all their exceptions and qualifications; and clearly see at a glance what may, and what may not be, in the possible administration of God.

If we believe this—and believe this, we must, if we reject what is contrary to our experience, till we have grown familiar with it, and are able to account for it—do we not believe *against* evidence? for; if there be any one thing more clearly taught than another, by all our past experience, it is, that we cannot depend upon ourselves, and that our best knowledge is limited and superficial: so that we are ever learning some new truth, or unlearning some old error.

One thing, at least, is very certain—it is a law of our nature. We must have some knowledge and some experience to believe any thing, as to fear any thing. A little child playing with Lucifer-matches, or lighted-thunderbolts, in a powder-magazine, or falling asleep on deck, with a baffling wind aft, and a strong current setting toward a lee shore, is never troubled—because, having no experience, he can have no fear; and if he should happen to have no faith in man, he might soon be past help, and past hope. He does not know enough to be afraid—the commonest of all reasons among the untroubled, or unconcerned, whatever may be their age. Certain dangers, to be sure, accompanied by noise and tumult, smoke and uproar, they always over-estimate; while others, like death by charcoal, or slow poison, or old age, or tobacco, or a gradual wasting, or atrophy, they always underrate—unless they put their trust in others, or have faith in the experience of others. Whenever danger happens to be afar off, or noiseless, or very

slow in its approach, they cannot be persuaded to believe in it, nor will they ever try to escape, unless they see others running away. He that would shrink trembling and aghast from the outer verge of the table-rock, overhanging Niagara, with the roar and mist of tumbling Oceans all about him, and the great gulf opening underneath his very feet, would bathe unabashed—untroubled—in the smooth treacherous waters, a little farther off, heedless of the signals made to him, with outstretched arms, or waving hands, from a distant shore. What he could neither see nor feel, he would be sure to disbelieve—unless he had some faith in his fellow-man.

‘A little learning is a dangerous thing’ says Alexander Pope. And wherefore? It may be just enough to mislead, or dupe us—by filling the mind with disqualifying self-conceit, where less, or more, might be comparatively safe. It is the half-enlightened—the presumptuous—who suffer most by what are called the dangerous properties of drugs, or gunpowder—they will be trying their luck with horsemanship and chloroform—they are always meddling with whatever they do not well understand, among the swift machinery of the world. The more unmanageable the better; for, come what may, they hope to be remembered by the newspapers. Crows, being but a little wiser than their winged neighbors, know just enough to be frightened away from their suppers, by a white woollen thread, or a flying rag. If they knew less, they would never heed it—if more, they would finish their supper in peace. They who bait their traps with their own fingers, are never the underwitted

—they are the clever and presumptuous, who pride themselves on stealing the bait, without springing the trap.

And yet another thing is equally clear. With all our experience, and craft and cunning, and self-conceit, whenever a fact passes beyond the narrow circle of our observation, we lose the power, we want the chief element, of just appreciation. We have no longer a standard —we have no gauge—no quadrant for measuring altitudes, distances or magnitudes, in the Spiritual Universe. However strange it may seem to say so, yet one thing is no more wonderful than another—no more astonishing than another, where both are beyond our sphere of observation. In our ignorance—not in our knowledge—we are amazed at nothing, and therefore believe nothing: and claim to be as Gods.

To stop the sun at noon-day would no more astonish a Sioux chief, than to foretell an eclipse; and he that should put the wary Savage in communication with his family a thousand miles off, by the Telegraph wires, would be to him a greater than Joshua himself.

To send a shadow fifteen degrees forward or back, upon a dial, or a flight of steps, would not be likely to astonish him at all—unless he knew something of dials and steps, to begin with.

And so too, if a shepherd of the East were to see a lock of wool wet with dew, where all around was dry—or dry, where all around was wet; if he had some knowledge and some experience, he might believe something—not much however: and to him, for that very

reason, not knowing how much to believe, it would be no miracle.

Nor would it be a miracle, or anything out of the usual way, to the unbelieving Chemist, the Scoffer, or the Juggler; their little knowledge being but just enough to make them very suspicious, and exceedingly slow of belief. Knowing more—or less—they might be willing to trust their senses: but knowing just what they do, they are disqualified—they are too knowing by half: while to another, perhaps—to the Lord's Anointed, who stood upon Gilboa, towering head and shoulders above all the princes of Israel, sore wounded of the archers, and faint, and leaning upon his spear—the horsemen and chariots following hard after him—it would be, as if the earth had opened underneath his feet, or as if the very skies about him, and above him, were in travail with prodigious consummation:

Though earnestly desiring death at the hands of a follower; though undismayed, perhaps, at the foretold destruction of his whole house—though forsaken of God—and clearly foreseeing the end of all his kingly hopes; for he had not been ‘paltered with in a double sense’, by the ‘juggling fiend’ he trusted—when the awful shadow stood, face to face, with the warrior monarch, and said to him, ‘*To-morrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me!*’—she had not ‘kept the word of promise to the ear, and broke it to the hope’—yet, to him, the believing Saul, and not the unbelieving, that lock of wool might have been more terrible than an army with banners, garments rolled in blood, or the shouting of the Captains.

To go up through the clouds in a chariot of fire, would not more astonish a little child, or a South-Sea Islander, than to go up in a painted balloon, with parachutes like horses: and the poor Hindoo, if he had seen that circus rider, mounted on horseback, with lance in rest, who went up from the heights of Paris not a twelve-month ago by the help of such a balloon, might well be forgiven, if he mistook the apparition for that ‘dread Brama’, who is to come hereafter, and ‘shake the sunless skies’—when, according to the faith of his fathers,

‘Heaven’s fiery horse beneath his awful form,
Paws the light cloud and gallops on the storm.’

While to the very beggars and children of Paris, it would be no more wonderful than riding on three horses, or leaping through a balloon afire, at Franconi’s.

The possibility of journeying five hundred miles an hour would be a matter of easy faith to a barbarian who had the experience of sixty miles an hour, without understanding it fully: for something of it he must have understood, or he would be no more astonished at sixty, than at six miles an hour.

Catlin says of the Mandans, the Foxes, and other warlike tribes of the far West, that many of their chiefs, though far apart, and strangers, gave precisely the same reason for their unwillingness to sit for their pictures. They were afraid, as the eyes of the portrait would be always open, that they themselves would never be able to sleep again. There was just that amount of experience, and knowledge, and sagacity, which disqualifies. Had these deep, clear, and original thinkers, men of a sincere

and blameless life, according to the testimony of Catlin himself, known a little less, or a little more, they would not have been afraid of their own shadows; nor would they have made themselves a laughing-stock to the somewhat more enlightened, by their unbelief. As ‘giants among pygmies’—the ‘one-eyed monarchs of the blind’—they were in the worst possible condition for judging of the truth. Like the poor birds that are hindered from helping themselves to what they most need, by white threads, or fluttering rags, these poor Indians know just enough, not to be made fools of, perhaps, but just enough to make fools of themselves; and, of course, are among the last of mankind to be reasoned out of their unbelief. Having no safe knowledge, on the subject in question, they were incapable of weighing testimony, and therefore disqualified for judging upon the strongest possible evidence.

Account for it, as we may, the simple truth seems to be, that up to a certain point, the more we know, the more suspicious we are, and the less we believe: while beyond that point, the more we know, the readier we are to believe, upon proper evidence, and the more unwilling to disbelieve, without evidence, or against evidence. The Ancients, with Socrates, Aristotle, Brutus, Lord Bacon, Swedenborg, Napoleon Bonaparte, Lord Byron, Sir Matthew Hale, Cotton Mather, and others of a correspondent grasp and comprehensiveness, believed much that inferior minds make a jest of; and were called superstitious. Little as may be the amount of intellectual power, needed for belief, much less would seem to be required for unbelief. If the great are sometimes of

easy faith—readily cheated—and credulous; it may be, because they overrate themselves, or underrate others—and are above suspicion. It never enters the head of a truly great man, that he may be overreached by a child, or a simpleton. But who are they that believe nothing, and suspect every-body? Are they ever the truly great?

Blockheads are not often credulous, though the ignorant are; but all these great men believed, and openly avowed their belief, in what no blockhead ever did believe, or would ever be willing to acknowledge he believed.

Count up the disbelievers in Copernicus—in Galileo—in Harvey and the circulation of the blood—in Jenner and Vaccination—in Franklin and Electricity—in Gall, Spurzheim and Phrenology—in Mesmer and Animal Magnetism—in the Quadrature of the Circle—the discovery of Longitude—Homœopathy—Chloroform—the Daguerreotype, or Perpetual Motion—and who are they? and what have they always been from the first? Diligent inquirers after truth?—slow, cautious, honest, faithful, inquisitive men? or hasty and presumptuous people, quite above the vulgar whims and prejudices of the hour—much too busy for deliberate examination—and altogether too wise, and too knowing, not to feel satisfied that what they do not understand, or know, by intuition, can neither be true, nor worth knowing, if it were true?

Are they men of careful and deliberate opinions—tolerant of honest error—conscientious, wary and slow?—are they charitable?—or do they begin with loud asseveration, sneers and scoffing? Do they not declare in

substance, if not in so many words, that they already know all that is to be known of the secrets of Nature, and the laws of God? that all who entertain a different belief are to be pitied and avoided, if not as knaves and fools, at least, as not worth reasoning with, or talking to, seriously?

Dr, Lardner tried this, not long ago; and while he was demonstrating at Liverpool, the impossibility of navigating the ocean by steam to any useful purpose—a man of much less knowledge, and well nigh unacquainted with the laws of Hydrostatics, and Hydraulics—a New-Englander perhaps—Yankee like—‘whittles her out’, and solves the problem. Had the Dr. known much less, or much more, he would not have committed himself so rashly to all future generations; but, like the Mandan Savage, knowing just enough to make a fool of himself—in a serious way—he took the earliest opportunity of doing so, with a show of being wiser than other people.

Living within the Tropics are a multitude at this hour—whole nations indeed—who cannot be persuaded to believe in snow or ice, till they have handled or tasted both. Lumps of water and lumps of light are alike to the inexperienced, every-where. And a few that have been carried away into slavery from these regions of unbelief, and have seen what the white wizards are capable of, would be likely, if they saw either, to believe it a product of man, or to mistake the snow for powdered sugar, and the ice for shattered crystal, or broken glass.

To the wholly unenlightened, it would be preposterous to maintain that such things are, unless you have speci-

mens with you to satisfy them ; while the philosophers and original thinkers among them, if there happen to be such, would settle the question forever, and to the satisfaction of the great unreasoning multitude, perhaps, by demonstrating the impossibility of such things ; by appealing to their past experience ; or by asking, with triumphant self-complacency, why the northern atmosphère could not be frozen solid, cut into large blocks, and shipped to the ends of the earth—as it was reported by travellers they did with frozen water, in portions of North-America—water itself being only air ; and air, according to the strange theory of these dreamers, only snow and ice in the form of vapor ; or, peradventure, there might be found somebody to put a stop to the hallucination, by saying in so many words, ‘I do not believe there ever was, or ever will be such a thing as snow or ice. Every-where we find law—the *constant* mode of operation of the infinite God. I try all things by the human faculties’. Ergo—snow and ice are delusions. Q. E. D.

To Paul, the believer, all things were possible. But how was it with Saul, the unbeliever ? He could not believe that Christ himself was possible.

And therefore—to bring all this into shape with a few words—if we are to believe at all in the strange or marvellous, or in anything whatever, beyond the sphere of our own personal experience, we *must* believe on the testimony of others : and to do this, we must have neither too much, nor too little knowledge, on the subject—but just enough—otherwise we are apt to believe nothing—in some cases, forsooth, because we do not understand mysteries—in others, because we do.

But can we believe at our pleasure?

No.

Can we believe, in opposition to the testimony of our senses?

Most undoubtedly, for we do so every day; and the older we grow, the readier we are to require some other proof than that which, in our childhood, was always enough. And why? Because our understanding assures us, from hour to hour, and from day to day, that we cannot always trust our senses; and, as the woman appealed from Philip drunk, to Philip sober, so do we appeal to our judgment, and our past experience, whenever our senses are disturbed by phenomena, or apparent wonders: for, as we do not trust their evidence, when a juggler would have us do so, or a straight stick pushed under water becomes a serpent—so, in all other situations, we do not believe in a fact, until we have weighed and measured all the evidence, compared part with part, and reasoned upon the whole, with a seriousness and carefulness, proportioned to the magnitude of the question.

But can we believe in opposition to our understanding?

No more than we can believe in opposition to our belief; for, up to a certain point, understanding and belief are always co-existent, and each the measure of the other; while beyond that shadowy point, which is ever shifting in the progress of our knowledge—although we cannot believe in opposition to our understanding; yet we may believe—though we do not understand—because of our faith in others, dead or alive, man or God: as where we entrust our ships and cargoes, our propert"

and character, to strangers we never saw; and our health and life to a surgeon, or a navigator, we never met before—we ourselves being wholly unacquainted with the course of trade, or wholly ignorant of surgery and navigation—and therefore incapable of understanding the whys and wherefores of their behavior. And this, I take it, is just what is required of Mankind, under the name of belief, or faith. God requires to be trusted, as we trust our fellow-men every day—and nothing more; and the proof he asks for, is only that which we are always ready to give our fellow-man, after professing to put faith in him. Our doings are to correspond with our professions. And this, I believe, is all God requires of man—trust, and faith, and hopefulness, and a correspondent behavior.

But enough. It is high time this controversy were ended. And the following propositions and queries are submitted herewith, to the honest and thoughtful among Unbelievers—and with no others would I have to do, if I could help it—in the hope that they may be found worthy of prayerful consideration—as embodying, in a few brief words, the whole substance of the foregoing argument. Elaborated with many throes, and much prayer; with prayer they should be weighed and answered, if answered at all.

1. In the administration of Almighty God, if a miracle were needed, a miracle would happen. To deny this, were to deny the wisdom or the power of Almighty God.

2. If there ever was a miracle, it must have carried its own evidence with it; and must have been capable

of proof. Otherwise, it would cease to be a miracle, by not fulfilling the purposes of a miracle.

3. Have we not all the evidence, that the alleged miracles of Scripture are now capable of?

4. Have we not the highest possible evidence, ever recognized by the human understanding, or by earthly tribunals, for the establishment of any alleged fact—in support of these alleged Scripture miracles?

5. Have we not a large amount of corroborating testimony, in the progress of ages, and in the fulfilment of ancient, unquestionable prophecies, over and above all that eye-witnesses, and ear-witnesses, could have had to any such fact whatever?

6. If these were true miracles, and not lying wonders, how otherwise could they now be proved, than they are proved?

7. Not to acknowledge this, would be to assume that miracles were never needed—or that if needed, they were incapable of proof: that they were impossible, to the Lord God Omnipotent himself: or that, if possible, they could not be proved, however much they might be needed: or that Jehovah, in the administration of the Universe, never understood the question as others do, and failed to provide for that authentication, or proof, without which, the greatest of miracles would be worthless.

FAITH.

Faith distinguished from *Belief*. How much is needed? With how little can we hope to be saved?

‘Can the Ethiopian change his skin? Or the Leopard his spots? ‘*Then*’—and not till then—‘may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.’ Jer. xii: 23.

Now, if there be meaning, or truth, in this declaration of the Hebrew Prophet, it is clearly impossible for *them* to do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

So too, when we are solemnly assured, by the Saviour himself, that it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man—as a rich man—to enter the kingdom, we do not require to be told, that such a thing—though possible with God, since with Him, all things are possible—is nevertheless impossible for Man, without help from above.

Both were proverbs, intended to assert a hopeless impossibility, in a way to be remembered forever; just as we say, to the dreamers of our age, ‘When the sky falls, we shall catch larks’.

But who are they that are ‘accustomed to do evil’? Are they not all Mankind?

Then, if *all* are ‘accustomed to do evil’, and if, to do good, be the condition of happiness hereafter; and if he

only, that feareth the Lord and worketh righteousness, can be accepted ; there is no hope for Man, but in the miracle of Regeneration. God must work wonders for him, and within him, or he is lost forever.

Hence the necessity of faith ; and faith, too, in one miracle, if no more—the miracle of Regeneration,

And now, what is Faith ? And how much must we have, and of what kind, to be safe ? In other words, what is the least we can do with ? for such is the true question, after all, with the great body of Unbelievers, and perhaps, with most Believers. The true question, stripped of all round-aboutness, if we may judge by the behavior of mankind, seems to be just this—With how little faith, can we hope to be saved ? Although, among them, are to be found many, who go one step further, and ask, how much they *must* have, to be sure.

Paul says, in the great Epistle to the Hebrews, ch. xi : 1, ‘Faith is the *substance* of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.’ If, instead of calling faith the *substance* of things hoped for, he had called it the *shadow*, or type, of things hoped for—just as he calls faith the *evidence* of things not seen, instead of the things themselves—there would have been little or no difficulty in the definition, perhaps. But Paul never uses words without meaning : and when he calls faith the *substance*, we are bound to believe that he meant just what he said, and that faith—Scriptural faith—is indeed something more than a type, or a fore-shadowing—a comfort, a consolation, or a hope. In other words, we are to understand by the word, a substantial and abiding assurance.

What men of the world understand by faith, is that inward strength of conviction, without which, the whole business of the world would stop. Without faith, no man could lift his hand to his mouth, or snuff a candle—for, without faith, no man would try. If he did not believe he could do it—or rather, if he believed he could not do it—he would no more think of trying to lift his arm, than of trying to blast a fig-tree, or to raise the dead. Hence that hallucination, where the sufferer cannot be persuaded to move. He sits motionless, and speechless, believing himself powerless.

Belief and Faith are sometimes, though not always, interchangeable terms. The Devils believe and tremble—but have they *faith*?

We trust ourselves, our property, our children, our very lives, and characters, to the watchfulness of strangers, dependent upon other strangers, amounting to hundreds, or thousands; any one of whom, if treacherous or faithless, might betray us to utter and irretrievable ruin. And yet, we sleep soundly in our faith.

We send a ship and cargo to the uttermost ends of the earth, on a three years' voyage, perhaps, believing the representations of comparative strangers, about China, and the North-west Coast, ginseng, and the fur trade, till we are satisfied that a profitable business may be done for us, by people we have never seen, and never wish to see, of a questionable character for truth, and much given to cheating and pilfering. And yet, because of our faith in Man, we are untroubled.

We submit ourselves to another stranger, in a strange land, perhaps, and swallow poison at his bidding—or

allow him to cut off a leg, if he thinks it worth while, without flinching, and without a misgiving. And why? Because we believe in Man. We do more to prove this, than Alexander did, when he emptied the cup, which, for aught he knew, was drugged with death; for Parmenio was no stranger, but a tried and faithful friend: and yet, nobody thinks of celebrating our faith—for such manifestations are happening every day, and are common alike to the strongest, and to the feeblest of mankind.

You employ an advocate upon a question, which involves, not your substance only, nor your life, but your good name, all that you most value on earth; and you are comparatively tranquil; though you are among strangers, and know not which way to turn for help, and can do little or nothing for yourself. And why? Because of your faith in him—a cold, passionless abstraction—as well as in the jury, the judges, the witnesses, and the law; all strangers, all shadows, and all phantoms to you: for without such faith, you would be lost—and being both helpless and hopeless, no earthly friend could be of use to you.

Would it be unreasonable for your Heavenly Father to require of you, at least as much faith in Him, as you are obliged to manifest in your fellow-man, by proof not to be gainsaid, or questioned, in your dealings with him?

Would it be too much to ask of you a correspondent measure of untroubled faith, in your only advocate and mediator, Jesus Christ, where you can do little or nothing for yourself, and must believe this much, or be lost, forever?

You send money, jewels, messages, letters, bills of exchange, to the amount of thousands, or tens of thousands—perhaps of millions—in the course of your life, by land and sea ; and secrets of life or death, by mail, or express, or telegraph, through the length and breadth of Europe, America, and a part of Asia—knowing that your acknowledgments and suggestions will have to pass through the hands of hundreds, or thousands, of inquisitive people, no honester than your neighbors, or yourself. Yet, you have no misgivings. You are hopeful, serene and patient: you never lose an hour of sleep—nor a meal—and why? Because of your faith—not in God—but in your fellow-man.

You believe in the North Star—in the Magnetic needle—in the charts and maps that you never saw; in the laws of magnetism you never understood; in what are called the elective affinities, which you never thought of inquiring into, but always acknowledged for mysteries beyond your fathoming. You believe in the laws of navigation—in all that other men say about winds and currents—you believe in the captain and crew, the cook and the cabin-boy—in the carpenter, rigger, and blacksmith: you believe in the brain, and its functions—in the muscles and machinery of the arm, at the wheel, or on the yard; you believe in the rudder and the ropes, in the cable and anchor—knowing that if there should be a failure any-where, so much as of a single rivet or link, in that endless chain of causes, combinations and effects, upon which your very life depends, the ship may be lost, and you with it, and all that you most love on earth. And yet, you are untrou-

bled; and your sleep refreshes you, and you are not afraid to be left alone.

How complicated, and how strange! Day after day, and year after year, you risk your whole happiness here, and it may be, hereafter, on these multiplied combinations of human art, and on the good faith of your fellow-men—a large majority of whom you would not associate with, nor become answerable for, to the amount of a week's wages. And why? Because of the necessity there is, if we would live here, that we should believe in something. Were it otherwise, we could not live a day. We should be afraid to eat, or drink, or sleep—the whole business of the world—the machinery of the moral Universe itself, would stop. To believe nothing, were to do nothing—just as to do nothing, is not only to believe nothing, but to prove it.

Now, to all this long chain of causes and effects, can we not add another link, and trust God?

The more we do, the more we may. All our faculties are strengthened by use—in other words, by hardship and trial. Believing so much, why not believe more? And since the strength of the strongest mind—or the strongest man—like that of the largest pyramid, is only that which is to be found in the weakest part, how necessary that there should be a wholeness in our system of belief. Otherwise, our weakness may appear, just where all have counted upon our strength; and just there, we may soonest prove unworthy. Would Milo have carried the bull, had he not begun with the growing calf? Would any of us have been what we now are, had we ever stopped trying to do more?

You see the business of the World carried on by letters, which a child might open, or destroy, by wheelbarrow-loads ; traversing earth and sea, month after month, as if they bore 'a charmed life'. You find questions of peace and war settled by signs—passing through many languages, and over many empires, by the help of multitudes interested in defeating a negotiation ; and able, at any time, with a lucifer-match, or a little steam, such as continually escapes from the nose of a tea-pot unobserved, to baffle the mightiest monarch, and the ablest negotiation : and yet, if you yourself are to be believed, you are astonished that faith should ever be required of you by your Heavenly Father, in relation to what you never saw, never knew, never felt, and judge of, only from hearsay.

And, with all your faith, not only in Man, but in Men ; and not only in them that you know, and believe to be honest enough, as the world goes, but in strangers you never saw, and never wish to see, and whom you have good reason to believe dishonest, you find yourself wondering in secret—and your whole behavior can be accounted for upon no other hypothesis—that God Almighty should be so unreasonable, as to require of you as much faith in him, your Father, as you have always had in comparative strangers !

Look at this matter, I beseech you, and see if this be not substantially the reasoning you are satisfied with, when you would escape the troublesome suggestions of your own disquieted soul ?

But you have other objections to what is called faith in the Scriptures. To you, it seems to be but another

name for Salvation itself: in other words, to be all that is required of Man, to secure salvation: for example—‘If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God hath raised him from the dead, *thou shalt be saved.*’ Rom. x: 9.

But in this, you, and others like you, are greatly mistaken: for, notwithstanding the declaration of Paul, that ‘Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord *shall be saved,*’ Rom. x: 13; and of our Saviour, that he who believeth in Him *hath* eternal life; that through faith we are saved; and that the sick are made whole *by faith*; and notwithstanding all the mysterious intimations of Paul, and James, and others, about faith and works; there is, probably, no such thing as faith—a wholesome and saving faith—such as Christ and the Brethren looked for, and waited for—without works: for even the helpless and the bed-ridden may *do* something, for the help of others, if not for themselves.

Very plain are many of these declarations; and very hard are most of them to be reconciled to the supposition, that faith, of itself, is sufficient.

According to James, ii: 18, a man may say, ‘I have faith, and thou hast works’—but he adds, ‘Show me your faith *without works*, and I will show you my faith *by my works.*’

God, who looketh upon the heart, may know that we believe, without any outward manifestation of our belief; and yet we are commanded, not only to watch and pray, but to *work*; to remember the poor, to visit the sick and the fatherless. And wherefore? since God knows, and cannot be deceived? That others may see and

believe. Not being able to look into our hearts, when we do nothing but pray and profess to believe, how natural the dread sarcasm of others, and how just—‘What *do ye* more than others?’ Observe the language. What *do ye* more than others—not what *say ye* more than others?

With Man, as with God himself, professions are worthless. God looks to the heart; Man to the behavior. And not even the Great Teacher himself was an exception to the law, that faith and works must go together, and are never to be separated.

He went about doing good—busying himself therefore with the wants of others; and when he stood at the mouth of that open grave, waiting for a beloved friend to come forth, what did he first? And what last? ‘*He wept*'; and then He lifted up his eyes and said ‘*Father!* I thank thee that thou hast heard me! And I know that thou hearest me always; but *because of the people about me, I said this*, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, *Lazarus! come forth!*’

‘And the dead man came forth—bound hand and foot with grave clothes, and his face was bound about with a napkin.’ John, xi: 44.

Here, for the sake of the people about him, the Master wrought the miracle. He wanted to satisfy, not his Father—but his Brethren.

As well might a disobedient, headstrong child pretend to love his father, while bringing his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave; or a patient pretend to have entire faith in his physician, while refusing to take the medicine he

offers: or a client pretend to have the greatest confidence in the ability and good faith of a lawyer, while going contrary to his advice ; or a merchant to think highly of another's responsibility and character, while refusing to be answerable for his board, or to leave him alone among his papers, or to let his silver spoons go uncounted after they had been dining together ;—as for a human being to pretend a belief in God, while disobeying him, at every step ; or a trust in God, while his mind is over-anxious, and fretful, and peevish, about earthly things ; or his heart and countenance heavy with unspeakable sorrow, for any-thing but his own transgressions, or unworthiness, or unthankfulness.

No, no—professions are nothing—behavior and actions every-thing. No matter how frequent, how prolonged, how solemn, nor how mournful; no matter how clamorous —no matter how sincere: *unproved*, they amount to nothing: and there is no proof, but in *works*. Words, at the best, are only breath. Acts of obedience, love and mercy are wanted ; and nothing else will satisfy the understandings of men, or the purposes of God.

Is it not so with all the business of the World? Then, why should God be satisfied with less than Man requires? Sincerity itself, unaccompanied, or un-illustrated, by works of some sort, may be but another name for a dangerous, and ever-growing self-delusion.

You inquire the way of a guide, among the snow-paths and precipices of a strange country : you profess to have entire faith in him—and tell him so to his face—even while you turn away from the path, indicated by his out-stretched hand—or you persist in taking another, which

he has warned you against, over and over again, with darkness, and tumbling waters, and loosened avalanches, all about you: Can you hope to be believed?

We cannot help weighing this question—though we shut our eyes, and stop our ears, and laugh at the people of God. Sooner or later, we must be prepared to put ourselves on trial, *for our lives*.

Are we to believe nothing meanwhile that God says, until we have touched, and tasted, and tried for ourselves? even while we are satisfied with what a man may tell us—of other lands for example—without asking to see for ourselves—*can* we do this, ‘and hope to be forgiven’?

You profess to believe in the Rothschilds, or in Bates, Baring & Co.; but refuse to act upon such belief, or to commit yourself in any way, for proof. You make your remittances to Bombay, or Canton, through Paris, or Amsterdam, or St. Petersburgh, but never touch a bill drawn by either house, or its agencies, happen what may. How is it possible to believe you? You do not believe yourself. Actions speak louder than words. God you cannot deceive: yourself, you may.

And this, we are to observe, is the language of God himself; the plainest teaching of the Bible.

Your belief can be proved to others, and to yourself, only by correspondent action. And though God sees the heart, and cannot mistake, nor be deceived; and, for that very reason, may be satisfied with evidence, which man would overlook, or wholly misunderstand: Still, if God finds there nothing but profession—words—breath—however sincere, and however earnest, he will

not, and cannot be satisfied. And so too it may be with works. There may be no such thing as works, in the Scriptural sense, without faith. Works and faith must go together—or what can be their worth, in the estimation of God?

Works are but the evidence of faith; and faith, beyond all question, the very breath of life to works; faith may be likened to the blossoming; works, to the fruitage of christian character: warmth and brightness, however combined, or intermingled, are always brightness and warmth, and under no circumstances are they interchangeable.

There are those who would try to persuade themselves—and others—and not always in vain—that their understandings are shocked by such a doctrine. They are believers, at least, in Alexander Pope, if not in the Bible; and when they meet with such inconsiderate and presumptuous theology as the following, they are ready to cry out for joy,

‘For modes of faith, let graceless zealots fight,
His can’t be wrong, whose life is in the right’:

As if no faith were required of Man; as if an atheist, leading a moral life, and having no faith whatever, were safe: or as if, to believe that there is no sun, would annihilate the sun: or not to believe in the attributes of a deadly poison, would make it harmless: for this, if it means anything different from the Scriptures, must be the meaning of these two lines.

Why not believe in the following couplet, for a like reason?

‘For forms of government, let fools contest ;
Whate’er is best administered, is best’:

As if there were no difference between one government and another ! As if an absolute, unchangeable, hopeless despotism, administered in its perfection, were calculated to promote human happiness, just as much as the freest form of self-government, administered according to the genius of such a government, in the best manner :

Or these lines, which under one aspect, and having reference to Jehovah, as the Governor and final Judge of a moral universe—and not merely, as the Builder of the skies, are either pitiable nonsense, or downright blasphemy, under a show of the serenest philosophy :

‘Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall ;
Atoms and Systems into ruin hurled,
And now a bubble burst, and now a World.’

As if machinery and morality: the imperishable and the transient: the material and the spiritual, the soul, and the body, were all one thing before God !

But let us try to see for ourselves. Would not charity, without faith, degenerate into sheer sympathy, or downright ostentation ? Would not self-denial become a farce—lowliness, hypocrisy—worship, an affronting mockery ? and life itself an empty show indeed, without faith to dignify and hallow it ? And how can faith prove itself, without works ? or works avail aught, unsanctified by faith and love ? Is motive to go for nothing ? Are the intentions and purposes of the heart

always to be overlooked? Is this the way that men act in the affairs of this world?

The self-righteous man, the philosopher, and the proud, generous, truthful moralist, who value themselves on having no other religion; being altogether above the weakness of giving ‘up to the few what was meant for mankind’; and believing, or pretending to believe, that God looks not after the motive, where the heart is right and the action, or life, right—in the judgment of their fellow men; as if God judged as man judges, and as if the whole scope and bearing of the Scriptures were misunderstood on the subject of a right belief, or a distinguishing faith—might have their eyes opened, if they would apply such reasoning, faithfully, to the business of life, and to themselves, as fathers, friends, husbands, wives, or companions.

Let me suppose a case for consideration—a loving, watchful and patient father has one child, a daughter, greatly distinguished from all the rest, by gentleness, obedience, and faithfulness. Everybody speaks well of that child. The father feels comforted and strengthened, more and more every day, and is ready to lay down his life to secure that child’s welfare, if need be. But a sudden blight falls upon his hope. The hand of God lies heavy on the child: and as the hour of separation draws nigh, it is given to the father to read, not the countenance only, but the heart and soul of that dear child: for in view of death, she acknowledges, with streaming eyes, and locked hands, it may be, that never—never—in all her life, had she meant or intended to do anything, merely for the comfort or help of her poor

father; but only for herself; that she had never made a sacrifice in any way, nor manifested any self-denial, with a view to that dear father's approbation.

How think you that father would feel, to hear such acknowledgments issuing from the lips of a dying child, in the full possession of her senses? How *then* would he be likely to see the character of that child? Would not his whole opinion of her past life be changed? Overwhelmed with a new sorrow, would he not feel as if he, himself, had lived in vain? But yesterday, he was ready to cry out for gladness, God, I thank thee that this dear child is not as others are—to say to her, as did the father of the Prodigal to his elder son—‘All that I have is thine’! But to-day—having another child, perhaps—an outcast—does he not bethink himself once more of the wretched wanderer, who, after forsaking his father, and going afar off, and wasting his substance in riotous living, may yet be more worthy of a father's welcome? How much anxiety, and terror, and sleepless watchfulness, in the past! and how much of brightening hope, and cheerful trust, in the future! now, that, in recalling the years that have gone by, he remembers many an act of self-denial, or generous devotion; and that, with all the faults and follies of the poor outcast, he has never had reason to doubt his love.

Put yourself in the place of that father. Almost broken-hearted, to find himself, and all his love, uncared for, by the daughter he had so long doted upon, and lived for: and now, ready to be comforted—to kill the fatted calf—to bring forth the robe, and the ring—and run and meet the wretched wanderer, who had forsaken,

and all but forgotten, his aged father—and fall upon his neck and kiss him, or to lift up his voice and weep, on seeing him, while yet afar off.

Works may be of such a nature, as to prove that faith underlies the whole foundation of character. A lowly, self-denying, self-sacrificing spirit, proved by charity, kindness, and brotherly-love—by visiting the fatherless and the widow; by clothing the naked, and feeding the hungry—argues not only faith, but a wholesome, sound, effectual faith; although, as *proof*, it may never be conclusive with God, any more than it would be with Man.

You declare that you believe in my representations, but you refuse to act in correspondence with that belief: you tell me that you have perfect confidence in my prescription—but assertions are nothing to the purpose—if you would make me believe, you must follow it. In all the business of the world, you must commit yourself by some act, or how *can* we believe you?

And now, let us go to the Bible, and see, if we may, just what is required of us; and with how little faith a man may hope to be saved.

He is not required to believe in contradictions—the only impossibilities with God; but he may be required to pass them by, *for the present*, and wait for explanations hereafter: and Copernicus, Galileo, Newton, and La Place, if they were alive now, with the great Ross telescope, to clear away the mysteries of Heaven, and solve the mightiest of problems, and reconcile the greatest contradictions, one after another, by merely sweeping, with a new power, the new field of vision—would wish they had suspended, or withheld their opinions, till they

had taken, at least, one degree more, in the uppermost class of earthly intelligences.

He is required, perhaps, to distinguish carefully, and constantly, between the *knowable* and the *unknowable*—as in questions about free agency—the origin of evil—the eternity of matter—the temptations of Him, who was tempted as a man, though without sin—the age of the world, and election—and to be satisfied with looking into the first, while here; and leaving the last for hereafter: else, every step in life may lead to new difficulty, new distress, or to other seeming errors and contradictions, or to long and bitter controversies.

We are not required to believe against evidence; nor without evidence—nor even *with* evidence, always; nor to have so much faith as to remove mountains, to raise the dead, to cast out devils, to walk on the sea, or to seal up the heavens for three whole years; but we are required to be honest and open-hearted; to be diligent seekers after truth—and to ‘have no other Gods but me’—the God of the Hebrews—the great I AM. We are not required to wrestle with angels, to beleaguer cities, to lie down with famished lions, nor to walk through flames, untouched and unharmed. This kind of faith may not be required—though that, which is called obedience unto death, can never be wholly abandoned on earth, while the fires of persecution are unsmothered, or unextinguished, and our testimony is wanted for the help of others.

It is not a little strange, considering how men differ, that although our Saviour, from first to last, required of his followers faith, it was never faith alone—but always

faith, *accompanied by works, or action* : and that, notwithstanding the advantages they enjoyed, in their daily companionship with him, they were all wanting, from first to last, it would appear, in that essential pre-requisite—faith. For example :

Peter—that self-confident, over-zealous, boastful man—is no sooner assured that upon him the Church of Christ shall be built, and that he shall be entrusted with the keys of Heaven, if not of Hell, with the solemn declaration, that ‘whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound in Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it will be loosed in Heaven’—than he rebukes his Lord and Master, notwithstanding him to the face, for saying it was necessary for him to go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many things, and be put to death, and raised again on the third day ; saying unto that Lord and Master, ‘Be it far from thee, Lord ; *this shall not be unto thee* :’ showing his want of a wholesome and reasonable faith. Whereupon the meek and lowly Jesus, moved with indignation, says, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan ! thou art a snare unto me : for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.’ Matt. xvi : 18—24.

And so too, on seeing this Lord and Master walking on the sea, he calls out, as if to boast of his own strength among those who were frightened at the near approach of what they mistook for a spirit, ‘Master ! if it be thou, bid me come unto thee *on the water*. And he said, come ! So Peter went down from the vessel, and walked *on the water* toward the Saviour ; but seeing the wind boisterous, he was afraid ; and, as he began to sink, cried

out, Master! save me! And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and saith unto him, *O thou of little faith!* wherefore dost thou doubt?" Matt. xiv: 27—32.

'*O thou of little faith!*' and yet, poor man! he had faith enough to cast himself headlong into the sea, with a full assurance that, whether little or much, he had enough—and so it proved, till he began to sink; and then it was found to be too little: and why? Because he had forgotten the promise, and allowed himself to be frightened by the boisterous wind. He had faith enough to walk on the sea—to go *toward* the Saviour—but less than enough to *reach* him, without help.

Was Peter himself deceived? Or did he hope to deceive the Master, when he girded his fisher's coat about him, and flung himself into the sea, at the bidding of his Lord? What must have been the deep, strong persuasion of his heart, before he could bring himself to hazard so much? And yet he was a self-deceiver; and though the Saviour was never so nigh, as when his faith failed, and he felt himself sinking, and cried for help; yet in truth, perhaps, he had relied, not so much on the heartiness of the faith he had undertaken to prove to others about him—for no proof was needed by the Saviour—as upon a secret, unacknowledged hope, that another yet, and yet another miracle, would be wrought, if needed to save him; and that he would never be allowed to perish, though swallowed up alive, within reach of that almighty hand.

We might peradventure, try to persuade ourselves that he had faith enough, and to spare, if he had such faith; but another, and a better judge than we are,

says to him ‘O thou of *little* faith’!—whereby we may learn that we must have not only faith enough—but faith of the right kind, or temper, to be safe; else, like them that ‘believe and tremble’, we may find ourselves at the left of the Judge hereafter, and not so much for a lack of faith, as for a wrong faith.

We are to believe ‘with our *hearts* unto righteousness’: And not only this, but we are to believe just in the way appointed, and in no other way, according to the evidence furnished, to satisfy the searcher of hearts—our Father.

When told to stretch forth our *right* hand—to stretch forth our *left*, because we may not be able to see why it should make any difference, would be not only useless, but affronting, whatever might be our faith. If bidden to cast our net on the left side of the ship, would it be safe to cast it on the right side, though the waters were swarming with life? When commanded to bathe in the Jordan—in the Jordan, we must bathe, and no-where else. No other waters will do—not even those of Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, though ‘better than all the waters of Israel’.

And why? Because, with our faith, be it much or little, there must be obedience—action—or *works*; and this, not so much to satisfy God, who knows whether we are sincere, without such proof, and is always ready to forgive honest misapprehension, as for the bystanders and witnesses, who, not being able to search the heart, cannot be satisfied, unless they see the conditions fulfilled, and the miraculous result following unquestionable and exact obedience. Look at the Saviour. When about saying to Lazarus ‘Come forth’! he prays.

‘Father! I thank thee that thou hast heard me; and I know that thou hearest me always—but, *because of the people about me, I said this, that they may believe that thou hast sent me*’, is the language of One who well understood his errand here, and never lost sight of his ‘Father’s business’.

And so too, at the last supper. ‘Thou shalt never wash my feet,’ says Peter: And he meant what he said. But upon being reproved with great gentleness by the beloved Master, saying ‘if I do not wash thee, thou hast no part with me’ the remonstrance becomes a prayer, ‘*Lord! Not my feet only, but my hands also, and my head!*’ John xiii: 9, 10.

And soon after this—or straightway, perhaps—for the narrative, and the order of succession would imply as much, this very ‘Simon Peter saith unto him’: ‘Lord whither art thou going?’ And when Jesus answered ‘whither I am going, thou canst not go now, Peter saith Master! why cannot I go with thee now? *I will lay down my life for thy sake*’—and ‘though they all forsake thee *yet will not I*’.

‘Then Jesus saith unto him, “Thou wilt lay down thy life for my sake! Verily I say unto thee, this day—in this very night—before the cock crow twice, thou wilt deny me thrice”—not thou *shalt*, as if long pre-determined, but thou *wilt*.

‘But Peter said again and again—if I must die with thee, I will in no wise deny thee, O my master. *And so said they all!*’

And yet, when the hour of trial and bitterness came, ‘*they all forsook him and fled*’!—even the boastful and

fiery Peter, and that beloved disciple, John, who had leaned upon his bosom, at the supper, and slept, nevertheless, while his dear Master, who had set him on the watch, was weeping and praying by himself, and ‘sweating as it were great drops of blood’, a little way off; though he came to himself at last, and was found at the foot of the cross, to hear the dying Saviour say, ‘Behold thy mother! and ‘woman, behold thy son!’

And why forsook they him, after all these tender warnings?—why, but because of their unbelief? And ‘that the prophecies might be fulfilled’?

And yet—remember—they were all forgiven; and judging by what appears, over and over again, and every day of their lives, and perhaps every hour, if not seventy times seven, every hour. To John, he bequeaths a beloved mother, notwithstanding his unfaithfulness; and to Peter he says, not as before, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan! Thou art an offence to me!’ but, ‘Simon! Simon! Behold Satan hath obtained leave to sift you *all* like wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy *faith may not utterly forsake thee*; and when, at length, *thou hast turned again*, establish these, thy brethren.’

And so it was: for he not only ‘turned again,’ but he lived in the faith, and he died in the faith, and greatly ‘*established his brethren*; of course in their belief, and not in their *unbelief*.

And now, that we may be enabled to understand more clearly what is meant by faith—a saving faith—let us take up the following cases, with prayerful consideration.

1. ‘And when they were come to the multitude, a

man came up to him and said, “Master! have mercy on my son. He is a lunatic, and suffereth grievously; for often he falleth into the fire, and often into the water; and I brought him to thy disciples; *but they could not cure him.*” And why?

‘Then Jesus said, Perverse and *unbelieving* generation! How long must I be with you? How long shall I endure you? Bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked the evil spirit, and it came out of him, and the child was well from that moment.’

‘Then the disciples came up to him privately, and said, “Why could not we cast it out?”

‘And Jesus said unto them, Because of *your want of faith*. For verily I say unto you, if ye have faith, *as a grain of mustard-seed*, ye will say to this very mountain, Depart hence, thither, and it will depart, and *nothing will be impossible unto you.*’ Matt. xvii: 14—21.

Of course, therefore, we are bound to believe that even the disciples and apostles, and companions, the familiar friends, the brethren of his own household, and the constant witnesses of our Saviour’s daily walk and conversation, had not faith, *even as a grain of mustard-seed!* Yet were they *his*. And they were constantly forgiven, upheld, counselled, strengthened and helped. Wherefore, though we may have little faith, even less than the least apparently required, why need we be disheartened, or greatly troubled? If we are honest, and hopeful, be assured that He will answer for all our deficiencies. Our life, then, would be a continual prayer —‘Lord! I believe—help thou mine unbelief!’

2. ‘And behold, a great tempest arose on the sea, *so*

that the vessel was beginning to be covered with the waves ; but he was asleep. And his disciples came up to him and raised him, saying, Master ! save us ! or we are lost. And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful ? *O, ye of little faith !*

3. ‘ The leper says, ‘ If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.’ And what is the answer ?

‘ And Jesus, moved with pity, stretched out his hand and touched him, and saith unto him, I will—be thou clean.’ Mark, i: 40, 41.

Here, the faith of the poor sufferer could be judged of, by his coming to the Saviour and kneeling, and saying, ‘ if thou wilt, thou canst.’

4. So too, with the woman that stole up to him, and touched his garment : for she said *to herself*—and not to others—‘ if I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole.’

‘ And he said unto her, Daughter ! *Thy faith hath made thee whole.* Go in peace, and be whole of thy plague.’ Mark, v: 34.

But who of all that multitude pressing about the Saviour, and thronging his path, hears the whisper, ‘ if I may but touch his clothes, I shall be whole ?’ None but the Saviour himself, perhaps ; otherwise the disciples, or bystanders, *might* have made way for her, notwithstanding her uncleanness—nay, the rather, *because* of her uncleanness.

But lo ! ‘ feeling that virtue had gone out of him,’ he turns and says, ‘ who touched my clothes ?’ His disciples say unto him, ‘ thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, who touched me ?’—thereby

implying, that many had touched him ; and yet no virtue had gone out of him till then ; for lack of a wholesome and proper faith, perhaps. Mere curiosity would not bring down the blessing. But further—

‘He looked round about to see *her* that had done this thing’. Therefore he knew it was a woman, at whose touch virtue had gone forth. ‘But she, fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him *all the truth*’. And this, though very little at most, was enough. Her faith, whether much or little, had made her whole. And the bystanders must have been well satisfied, because of the fear and trembling they saw, which could not well be counterfeited.

5. And so with him that led his son, having a dumb spirit, into the presence of Jesus. He had faith, and proved it by his behavior. But watch the brethren, and compare *his* faith, simple, unquestioning and unhesitating, with theirs.

‘The declarations which I am uttering to you’, says the Saviour to them, ‘are the breath of life. But *some of you* believe not ; for Jesus knew before this, who believed not, and who would deliver him up’. John vi: 64, 65, or, according to our version, ‘for Jesus knew *from the beginning* who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.’

6. And so with Simon Peter, the fisherman. Look at his faith. How simple, how childlike, how sublime! ‘Master! we have toiled all night, and have taken nothing; *nevertheless*, at thy word, I will let down the net’. And what followed ?

'When they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes, and their net brake'. Luke v: 5, 6.

Simon Peter is commanded to launch out into the deep, and to cast his net on the *right* side of the vessel. He obeyed, though remonstrating, as usual, with a '*nevertheless*': but suppose he had cast the net on the other, or left side, think you he would have caught any fish?

And what other result would have been likely to follow? Want of obedience would have been want of faith, not only to the bystanders, but to the Saviour himself. The miracle would have been defeated—and the Saviour dishonored—for a leading disciple would have put the Master to open shame, and proved him powerless before the multitude—just when it was expedient that all should be satisfied of his power—for how should they be supposed to know, that it would make any difference, on which side he threw the net, when the disciple himself, who was best acquainted with the Master, had proved that, in his judgment, there would be no difference?—and if the fish did not come up with the net, on the *left* side, how were they that stood waiting the issue, to account for the failure?

Simon Peter may have honestly believed in his heart, if you will, that it could make no possible difference on which side of the ship he cast his net; and as honestly, that a miraculous draught would follow, '*nevertheless*'. But what think you?

And if it had—what then? Why then, there would have been, not only no proof in favor, but much against the supernatural authority of the Great Teacher. Dis-

obedience would have triumphed openly—and the result would have been regarded as wholly accidental, and the Master, as having ‘paltered with them in a double sense’—and if not as one having a devil, perhaps—for with that he had already been charged—certainly as a juggler and soothsayer, who had happened to guess pretty near the truth, for once.

And suppose the man with the withered hand, believing it impossible to obey, had not even tried to stretch forth his hand—would the cure have been wrought? Would not his unbelief be proved by his not trying? He might have persuaded himself that he was sincere—and the Saviour, who knew his very thoughts, would of course know; yet, how were the people about him to know that he believed in his heart, unless he obeyed, or tried to obey?

Here, after commanding the man to stand forth, and looking round upon the Pharisees, being angry, and at the same time grieved, for the blindness of their hearts, he said unto the man, ‘Stretch forth thine hand! And he stretched it forth, and his hand was restored whole as the other.’ Mark, iii: 4, 5.

And so with the man sick with the palsy, and borne of four. ‘And as they could not all come near him, because of the multitude, they took up the roof of the house where he was, by forcing open the door, and let down the bed on which the sick man lay. Now, when Jesus saw *their* faith’—faith proved by their works—and not the faith of the sick man, for he was helpless, and speechless, and passive, ‘he says to the sick man, “Child! thy sins be forgiven thee!”

‘Then some of the Scribes, sitting there, were reasoning with *themselves*, (not one with another), Why doth this man speak thus wickedly? Who can forgive sins, but God only? And Jesus, knowing at once in his own mind, that they were thus reasoning with themselves, said unto them, Why have you these reasonings in your hearts? For which is easier. To say to the sick man, thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise! and take up thy bed and walk? But that *ye* may know—not my disciples; for they know this already—but ‘that *ye* may know the Son of Man to have authority upon earth to forgive sins—then he saith to the sick man, Arise! and take up thy bed, and go home! And he arose immediately, and took up his bed, and went out before them all.’ Mark, ii: 4—12. Luke, v: 22—26.

Suppose that man had refused—not to take up his bed—but to *try*—and that was all required of him. He was to show his faith to the bystanders—not to the Saviour—by his works; in other words, by instantaneous, unqualified obedience.

So, when he blasted the fig-tree: ‘Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward forever! And immediately it withered away: and when his disciples saw it, they were *amazed*—but wherefore amazed, if they were believers?—and they said, How soon the fig-tree withered away! Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, *if ye have faith and doubt not*, ye will not only do like this of the fig-tree; but if ye say even to this mountain, Be thou removed, and cast into the sea, it shall be done. And whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *with faith*, that ye will receive.’ Matt. xxi: 19—22.

And he says moreover, Ye have not, *because ye ask not* : or, *because ye ask amiss*.

Did Lazarus obey ? Did the spirit of the dead come back to bear witness of the Saviour ? or was it only passive and obedient matter ? If Lazarus did not obey—and was unable—then it was not required of him, for the satisfaction of the people : and the summoning was answered by passive and obedient matter, with which Lazarus himself, and the spirit of Lazarus, had nothing to do.

As we draw near the last act of the awful drama, the first scene of which opens with these words, ‘In the Beginning, God created the Heaven and the Earth ; and the earth was without form and void ; and darkness was upon the face of the deep ; and the *Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters*,’ we hear the disciples saying—‘Lo ! now thou speakest plainly, and speakest not in proverbs’, (or, without any dark speech at all) ; ‘now are we sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee. *By this* we believe that thou camest forth from God. Jesus answered them and said—Do ye *now* believe ?’ John, xvi: 30, 31.

Observe the language. ‘*Now* we believe’, say they. ‘*By this*’ we believe ; now ‘we are *sure*’. Consequently, they had not believed till then, and were not *sure*. And so the Saviour himself understood them to mean ; for he says in reply, ‘*Now*, ye believe !’

And this, be it remembered, was just before the scattering, and the desertion. And though they professed to believe *now*, to see clearly, to feel *sure*, and to *know*

that he came of God, *yet they all forsook him and fled* ; though they had been warned by the Saviour himself, in the language of ancient prophecy—‘ I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad’, Matt. xxvi: 32—they all denied and deserted him ; and while Peter, the mightiest of all, cursed and swore, when charged with companionship, and told that his speech betrayed him, and that *this fellow* was also among them—yet did he no worse than the others—for they all forsook him—they all fled—and they all mocked poor Mary, that Believer, with all a woman’s faith, when she brought to them, the long promised greeting from the grave. Nor would they believe the two that were sent by Jesus himself ; and most of them would not take the trouble to see for themselves—a very common case, even now—so fixed and rooted was their unbelief.

What had they been praying for, all this time ? what looking for ? what hoping for ?—if it was indeed true that they understood him at last, and believed him at last, when he spoke plainly, and not in proverbs, nor in dark sayings ? Did they believe in prayer ?

But again : ‘ If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow will be cast into the furnace, will he not much more clothe you, *O ye of little faith !* ’ Here the Disciples had come to him, ‘ and he opened his mouth and *taught* them’—them, the Disciples—not strangers, but the Disciples, who most needed help. Matt. vi: 30.

Yet all these men were loud in their professions of faith. And among them were Peter, who, after rebuking his Master, deserted and betrayed him—for what is

denial, under such a question, but betraying?—and the doubtful Thomas, who would not believe—no, not until he had thrust his hand into the side of that uprisen Saviour he had followed so long, and been taught by, so kindly and so constantly. And these were types of all the rest; for, while speaking with him, after his death, and face to face, what say they? ‘We *trusted* that it was he which should have redeemed Israel.’ Luke, xxiv: 21. And when he suddenly appeared in their midst, after death, and said to them, ‘Peace be unto you!’ how did they receive him? They were ‘terrified and affrighted, and supposed they had seen a spirit.’ Luke, xxiv: 37. And they would not believe Mary, though he had promised plainly, and over and over again, to re-appear after death: nor did Mary herself believe—for what says the record? ‘She went with the women who had prepared spices and ointments to *embalm* the body.’ Luke, xxiii: 56, and xxiv: 1. And she inquired, when the body was not to be found in the sepulchre, where they had laid it?

And then, as we have already seen, she went to his companions, ‘who were mourning and weeping; but they, though they *heard* that he was alive, and had been seen by her, *believed not.*’ Mark, xvi: 11. ‘And not even the brethren believed on him,’ says John, vii: 5. And whether these were Brethren according to the flesh, or Brethren according to the spirit, they were Unbelievers.

‘But after this, he showed himself another day to two of them, as they were walking, on their way to the country, and *they went and told the rest,*’ who ‘would not

believe even them!' Mark, xvi: 13. They had not only no faith in their Master, therefore; but no faith in one another, and very little in themselves.

Yet further, and even to the last, we have the same pitiable want of honest faith; for grieved and sore with disappointment, after the messages he had sent were unheeded, at last he showed himself to the eleven, and upbraided them all with their want of faith, and their hardness of heart, for not believing them that had seen him, after he was raised up. Mark, xvi: 11, 12, 14.

'But the eleven disciples went into Galilee to the mountain that Jesus had appointed, and when they saw him, they worshipped him—but *some doubted*. Matt. xxviii: 17.

To know what is the faith, we must have at our peril; the faith we are all seeking for, we must call up the Hebrew lawgiver, Abraham, and Elijah, who sent up a messenger seven times to look for the signs of fulfilment, while he himself continued in prayer, with his head bowed between his knees, and after all was perfectly satisfied with a little cloud rising out of the sea, no larger than a man's hand, and so sure that he hears the sound of abundance of rain, like the going of the wind in the tops of the mulberry-trees, that he bids Ahab get ready his chariots, and flee for his life, lest the rain stop him.

All these mighty men prove their faith by their works. And so did the leper, the man with the withered arm, the woman that touched the garment of the Saviour, and the centurion. And so did Joseph and Daniel. Such is the faith required; a reasonable, not a reasoning faith; a submissive, not a questioning faith; such as a man

might show, while professing to believe that he could breathe in a fiery furnace, by entering forthwith, and without flinching or quailing, instead of reiterating his belief, and excusing himself with cant, or vociferation.

Thus much for the Bible history of what we call faith. I say nothing about miraculous faith—active or passive—or theological faith—but plain, Scriptural faith, which all may understand, without help from theologians. Every-where, and at all times, we see, that with Scriptural faith, to render it efficient, there must be co-operation. How could a mother help a child—a physician his patient—a lawyer his client—without co-operation? And how could there be co-operation without faith? Something must always be *done*—it is never enough to *say*: something, however little, to put us in communication with our Helper—to prove our willingness, our trust, and hopefulness. What say you now, my friend, is not this reasonable and just? And if so with Man, why not with God?

No works whatever—no satisfying manifestations, can there be without faith. I do not say, without a saving faith, nor without such faith as God requires. But unless we have some faith—of some kind—we are speechless and motionless, and not only helpless, but hopeless.

By moving and acting, and in no other way, do we, or can we, prove our faith; or show the character and value of our faith, to our fellow-man.

Works are not only the evidence, but they are the only evidence of faith, which Man is capable of understanding, or believing.

As with Faith, so with Love, Hope, and Charity: all passions, and all emotions. What is the language of Earth, every-where, and at all times? Professions are nothing—pledges and promises nothing—actions everything.

But, whatever may be the nature of the faith required; and whether much or little—nothing seems better established, nor more reasonable, than that some evidence thereof must be given—by somebody—though a stranger. The works demanded, are not always required of the party helped. Sometimes, it would appear to be enough that others should have the right kind, and the proper amount of faith, if it be openly acknowledged, and honestly proved by action.

For example: In the case of the sick man healed of the palsy, it was not *his* faith, but *their* faith who brought him, and let him down through the top of the house, that moved the Saviour.

And then, there was the blind man. He did not go to Jesus. But, as he and the disciples are passing by, the disciples asked Jesus, saying, 'Master, who sinned? This man or his parents? that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither was he blind for his own sin, nor that of his parents; but that the *works of God might be manifested in him.*' * * * * When he had said this, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and spread the clay upon the eyes of the blind man, and said unto him, Go wash thine eyes in the pool of Siloam, (which means *sent*). So he went and washed his eyes, and came back with his sight'. Here, so far as we

know, there were no professions—but there was what the Saviour had already shown to be worth infinitely more—*action—obedience.*

And after this, Christ met with him, and said unto him, ‘Dost thou believe on the Son of God?’

And what is the poor creature’s answer?—Weigh it well. ‘*Who is he, Master, that I may believe on him?*’ Jesus said unto him, It is he whom thou both seest and *hearest* talking with thee. Then the man said: I believe, Master! and fell down before him.’ John, ix: 2, 6, 36—38.

But a still stranger case may be found in John: where a party, without professing to have any faith, or even to know who it was that had helped him, though able to see for himself, was cured. The narrative itself, without change or abbreviation, must be allowed to tell the story.

‘Now there is in Jerusalem, at the sheep gate, a bath called Bethesda, with five porches, in which a multitude of infirm people were lying, of blind, lame, withered; expecting the motion of the water. For an Angel at a certain season used to bathe himself in this water, and *thereby* trouble it; then he, who first went in, after this troubling of the water, became well of whatever disease affected him.

‘Now there was a man who had been *thirty-eight years*—in his infirmity. Jesus seeing him lie *there*, and knowing that he had been a long time *so*, saith unto him: Dost thou desire to be healed? The infirm man answered, Sir! I have no man, when the water is trou-

bled, to put me into the bath ; and while I am coming, another getteth down before me.

‘ Jesus saith unto him : Arise ! take up thy bed and walk ! And the man became well immediately, and took up his bed, and was walking.

‘ Now that day was the Sabbath : the Jews therefore were saying to him that had been cured : it is the Sabbath : it is not lawful for thee to take up thy bed.

‘ He answered them : He who made me well, said unto me : Take up thy bed and walk.

‘ Then they said unto him, Which is the man, who said unto thee, Take up thy bed and walk ?

‘ But he that was healed *knew not which it was* : for Jesus had slipped away, as there was a multitude in the place.

‘ Afterwards, Jesus findeth him in the temple, and said unto him : Behold ! thou art become well : sin no more, lest *something* worse befall thee.

‘ The man went and told the Jews that it was Jesus that made him well.’ John, v : 2—15.

Where, I would now ask, was this man’s faith ? He made no professions—he did not even know Jesus—but he *obeyed*.

Think of this ! After waiting *thirty-eight years* for somebody to help him ; after thirty-eight years of disappointment and sorrow, day after day, and month after month, perhaps, upon the very verge of restoration—but one single step being needed—that step is taken at the bidding of a stranger ; and lo ! he is instantly transfigured and restored !

Obedience therefore, in a small matter, without profession, may prevail, where the profession of a life would be worthless.

And then, there was the notable cure wrought by Peter and John for the beggar, who, so far from having any faith, did not even *expect* help in that way, but alms. *Acts, iii: 6* ‘In the name of the Lord Jesus of Nazareth, I command thee to rise’—*lifting him by the right hand*, as he spoke: so that, if little faith was required sometimes, none at all was enough here: and the obedience, after all, was nothing more than acquiescence, or non-resistance, when Peter lifted him up—at most, it was only what has been sufficient heretofore, with thousands and tens of thousands, from the dying thief upon the cross, to the death-bed of the last broken-hearted and speechless of God’s creatures—he *looked up*: for what says the narrative?

‘When Peter and John fastened their eyes upon him, and told him to *look up*, he obeyed, or gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something.’

Yet more: Although it is the common belief, and we hear it said almost every day, that while the Saviour wrought his miracles without help, and in his own name, the Apostles wrought theirs, never in their own names, but always with the help, and in the name of Jesus of Nazareth; yet we have at least five cases, where they were wrought by Peter and Paul, without mentioning Jesus of Nazareth, and of course without any manifestation of the faith required, by the parties helped, or troubled—faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, that is—so far as appears.

In the case of Tabitha, lying dead—incapable of belief therefore—‘Peter kneeled down and prayed ; and turning to the body said, Tabitha, arise ! So she opened her eyes, and upon *seeing Peter*, sat up. Then he gave her his hand and raised her up ; and called the Saints and the Widows, and presented her alive.’ Acts, ix : 40, 41.

In the case of Elymas, the sorceror, and the scoffing Unbeliever, if there ever was one, ‘Paul, filled with a holy spirit, set his eyes upon him, and said, “O, full of all guile and of all craftiness : son of the devil”—plain speaking, it must be acknowledged—“enemy of all righteousness ! wilt thou not cease making crooked the ways of the Lord ? therefore the hand of the Lord is now against thee, and thou wilt be blind, without seeing the sun for a season.” When immediately a mist and a darkness fell upon him, and he was going about in search of a guide.’ Acts, xiii : 10. But Paul’s faith was enough—like Peter’s, in the judgment of instantaneous death upon Ananias and Sapphira—though the name of Christ was not mentioned.

And then too, in the case of ‘the lame man of Lystra’, who had no use of his feet, having been lame from his birth, and never walked. He was listening to the speech of Paul : who looked steadfastly at *the man* ; and perceiving that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, ‘*Stand upright on thy feet !* And he rose up with a leap, and began to walk.’ Acts, xiv : 8—11.

And again, when Paul restores Eutychus, who ‘sitting in the window, as Paul discoursed so long, was seized with a deep sleep ; and having fallen backwards as he

was sleeping, tumbled from the third story to the bottom, *and was taken up dead.* Then Paul went down and fell upon him, and as he closely embraced him, said: Do not disturb yourselves, *for his life is in him.* * * * And they brought away the young man alive, and were not a little comforted.' Acts, xx: 10—12.

How much faith, after all then, is needed? We may be 'weak in faith'—but how weak—to be safe? 'Him that is *weak in faith*' says Paul, '*receive ye*, but not to doubtful disputations.' Rom. xiv: 1. The Apostle had a wholesome dread of mere controversy—or doubts and reasonings—though always well prepared, and 'armed in proof.'

Let us now see the effect of unbelief—or a want of wholesome and proper faith, a reasonable faith, on Jesus himself. As with mortals, in the great business of life, so with him. He needed help, sympathy and co-operation. See here:

'And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hand upon a few sick, and healed them.' And why? '*Because of their unbelief.*' Mark, vi: 5.

And then he *marvelled*. And wherefore? Because by their unbelief, they disqualified him—they disabled him. He *could* do no mighty works there, because he had no help. There was on their part, no willingness, no heartiness, no co-operation: They were not to be helped in spite of themselves—but partly because of themselves. They were to be saved with—and not without—their own co-operation.

What then is faith? Under the earlier dispensation, how did it differ from that which was required under the new? And how was it then proved?

Had Moses and Aaron faith enough, apart from their *belief*? What says that earlier Scripture? ‘And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron. Because *ye believed me not*, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore *ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them*’. Numb. xx: 12.

‘*Yet in this thing, ye did not believe the Lord, your God.*’ Deut. 1: 32.

And so too, where was the belief—where the faith of Moses, when he said ‘The people among who I am are six hundred thousand footmen; and thou hast said, I will give them flesh to eat a whole month. Shall the flocks, and the herds be slain for them to suffice them? Or shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together to suffice them?’ Numb xi: 21, 22.

And where was the belief, and where the faith of Abraham, the Father of the faithful, when, having the promise that a child should be given to him in his old age, he ‘*fell upon his face, and laughed!*’ and said in his heart, shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? And shall Sarah that is ninety years old, bear?

And Sarah too—such was her unbelief, that when she heard the promise at the door of the tent, *she laughed within herself*, and thereby manifested her unbelief, as her husband himself had, in a most offensive and affronting manner. And yet both were forgiven; both were abundantly blessed, and the faith of Abraham was counted unto him for righteousness.

Unbelief therefore among the earliest Fathers of mankind, *with obedience*, would appear to have been more acceptable to God, than belief, however strongly rooted,

or constantly asseverated, if unaccompanied by obedience. Of old, as now, the *doers* of the word were God's people, whatever might be their professions. Everywhere, from that day to this, He that feareth the Lord and worketh righteousness, is accepted.

Belief, on the contrary, unaccompanied by acts of obedience, may but aggravate our condemnation: for 'faith without obedience is not faith'—and 'we know thee, Jesus of Nazareth', say the evil spirits, who *obeyed* him—'Thee we know; but who are these? And fell upon them and tore them.'

And again: 'Thou art the Son of God!' they cry, when they are set free. 'Suffer us to go into the swine.' Here, we have not only belief, but obedience—and even prayer. Being of them that 'believe and tremble', they obey him, when they are cast out, and come forth at his bidding, and ask leave to go elsewhere; and 'confess him with their mouths'.

But had they faith?—faith in the scriptural sense?

To *believe* in the Lord Jesus cannot be enough therefore. Even to *obey* him is not enough—though obedience may be 'better than sacrifice'—there must be a particular kind of belief, or what is called *faith*; and a particular kind of obedience, or they will not be sufficient. Of that we may be sure.

There must also be open acknowledgment of such belief—or confession, for what says the great Apostle to the Gentiles, 'If thou shalt *confess with thy mouth* the Lord Jesus, and shalt *believe in thine heart* that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved', for, with the *heart*, Man believeth unto righteousness;

and with the *mouth* confession is made unto salvation. Rom x: 9, 10.

But the devils themselves did all this. They believed—they obeyed—and they confessed with the mouth: confession therefore, though coupled with obedience and belief—such belief as the wicked have—was not enough.

But; although we may be unable to give a clear and comprehensive, or exhausting definition of faith—of one thing we are certain. Without *such* faith, whatever it may be, we can do nothing, and have no safe ground of hope.

We may profess to believe that we cannot do this, that, or another thing, even while we profess to try. But we are deceiving ourselves. We should no more *try*, if we believed it impossible, than we should try to upheave a mountain, or overthrow a pyramid. There is involved a sort of childish self-contradiction in all such pretences, however serious, or plausible, or often repeated. ‘I did not get so much for my cargo as I expected—and I knew I should not,’ is the language of all those who waver in their faith, who are ‘unstable as water,’ and who, for that very reason, must not expect to be heard, or believed, when they pretend to lift up their hearts in prayer, with hopeful trust.

They are much like that minister who prayed fervently for rain at the desire of his people in a season of long continued drought. On leaving the church, he was met in the door-way by one of his parishioners with information that a cloud was coming up in the right quarter, and that large drops were falling. Heaven forbid! I forgot my cloak! was the answer.

Where was that man's faith ? or the faith of those brethren who had been praying for the liberation of Peter 'without ceasing'? and who, nevertheless, like the minister, were taken by surprise when their prayers were heard; for 'Peter stood knocking at the gate where many were gathered together praying; and they would not believe, but rebuked the damsel, Rhoda, who knowing the voice, opened not the gate for gladness, but ran in and told how Peter stood there—saying to her "*Thou art mad.*" But she constantly affirmed that it was even so. Then said they, It is his angel.'

Where was the faith of such brethren—or of that minister ; and what proportion did it bear in either, to the patience of that God they had been mocking with continual prayer ?

Let us be comforted, nevertheless, remembering the faith of Peter—very little though it was—when the Saviour put forth his hand to help him. But for the misgiving that threatened to engulf him, he had not felt the nearness of the Saviour, nor the touch of his hand. Such, it may be, are the wholesome effects of alternation. To be cured of anything, we must be sick. To be comforted, we must be troubled. Untroubled faith, is not faith—nor is that faith, which never falters—like the righteousness that needs no help, and therefore, asks for no help: and for that very reason, if for no other, cannot be strengthened, nor comforted.

Nor must we ever be disheartened. It may be, that like the unbelieving Thomas, we may be ready to die with our Master, even while we do not believe. Often-times, it may be easier to die, than to believe.

And If so—God help us! here and hereafter! and show us, before it shall be too late, how to understand the great mystery; and not only what is the true faith, and how much is to be required of us—and how little—but whether obedience even unto death, or confession with the mouth, or acknowledgment, and prayer, will *ever* be accepted, any-where, at any time—instead of a proper faith!

It may be, that we are all deceiving ourselves. It may be, that we have always more faith, by far, than we give ourselves credit for—else, how could we ever be obedient unto death? And it may be, that the God who hath so loved us, that he gave his only-begotten Son to die for us, may only require to be *loved* and *obeyed*.

‘Simon Peter! *lovest thou me?*

‘Yea Master, thou knowest that I love thee.

‘He saith unto him, *Feed my lambs!*

‘He saith to him again, Simon, son of Jonas, *lovest thou me?*

‘He said unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee.

‘He saith unto him, *Feed my sheep!*

‘He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, *lovest thou me?*

Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord! thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee.

‘Jesus saith unto him, *Feed my sheep.*’ John, xxi: 15, &c. &c.

Here we have the whole question settled for us ; and for all who may come after us, by the highest authority—an authority which may not be gainsaid, and from which there is no appeal, here nor hereafter.

He that doeth the word, is accepted—not he that sayeth, and doeth not. Visiting the widow and the fatherless, helping the brethren, working righteousness—are not these the sacrifices we are called to offer ?

Not sacrifice, but prayer: not the cattle upon a thousand hills—for they are His; nor the fullness of the Earth, for that also belongs to Jehovah; but a loving, hopeful and sorrowing heart: for after all, it is with the heart we believe, and with the heart only, whatever we may do with the head; just as we love with the heart, and yearn with the heart, and never with the head: so that, notwithstanding all that may be said of a saving faith, it is declared, that 'He who worketh righteousness and feareth the Lord is accepted': then—going a step higher, and as if to encourage the over-fearful—that '*perfect love casteth out fear.*'

And if so, what can be clearer, and what more need we to have, or to know ?

How often are we wounded by the spent arrows of thy strength, O Lord ! O help us, we pray thee, against ourselves; that we may be more than a match for the great Adversary of Man !

How long shall the far-off thunderings of prophecy be unheeded, before they break over the nations to fulfilment ?—'O Lord ! how long ?'

A CHANGE OF HEART.

‘He looketh on the Earth and it trembleth : He toucheth the Hills and they smoke.’ Ps. civ : 32.

You profess to be a reasonable, and therefore, a *reasoning* man, or woman. You desire to know the truth ; and have no time for investigating the systems of theology, nor even the elementary treatises, that have been recommended to you.

Without stopping to inquire why it is, that you have time for every-thing else ; and no time for that, which, as a reasonable, and therefore a *reasoning* man, or woman, you must acknowledge to be of great importance, and peradventure, of greater importance than all you now most value, and are most occupied with : nor why it is, that you are satisfied with guess-work, where you have so much at hazard ; or with second-hand opinions, when you may have all that you need, upon authority not to be questioned, if you will but ask for it, and wait patiently for the answer ; let me try to deal with some few of the many troublesome, though allowable questions, you may have heretofore propounded—to yourself, perhaps, if not to others—and to do it reverentially, in the fear of the Lord, according to the best of my knowledge and belief.

I might refer you to the Bible—for the *law* of your case ; but you have always had the Bible, and the law. I might urge you to a diligent study of the Gospels, for another and a better hope, sure and steadfast ; but you profess to be already acquainted with their teaching, and to know, at least by hearsay, what is meant by the comforts and consolations of the Gospel. I might ask what you can possibly hope from delay : whether you are likely to have more time to-morrow—or the day after—or *ever* ; a lighter load of transgressions to carry, a heart more accessible to the tender solicitations, and gentle remonstrances—I will not say of God's holy Spirit, lest you may not be prepared for the question—but of the spirit within you, and of the spirits around you : God's ministering angels on Earth, who come to you in love or friendship, to plead with you for your soul ; but you are familiar with all these questions : you have weighed them all, over and over again : and you acknowledge, it may be with tears in your eyes—for such things have happened, and are happening every day, among those who are believed to be untroubled—that, inasmuch as you have more and more to answer for, with every breath you draw, matters are growing worse and worse with you, every hour ; and that while your wants are increasing, your hopes, and even your chances, are diminishing, day by day.

Under such circumstances, the path of duty lies unclouded before me, as a Beginner. I am not allowed to say ‘ Ah Lord God ! Behold I cannot speak, for I am a child’. I am to do the best I may, with prayer and hope ; trusting that He, whom I profess to follow with

somewhat of a child-like faith, will forgive me for undertaking to do what I am so poorly qualified for; and that, come what may, there are those of the great multitude within hearing, who will neither misunderstand, nor misrepresent me.

Perhaps you desire to know what is understood among Believers, by a change of heart; how that change is manifested to others: and what are the unmistakeable signs of its approach, progress, and fulfilment; for these questions are always astir within the secret chambers of the mind, among thoughtful men and women; and it is with such only that I now have to do.

There are, I am led to believe, no unmistakeable signs; no signs that is, which may not be misapprehended or counterfeited; no outward manifestations, which may not mislead our fellow-man.

A long life spent in praise and prayer and thanksgiving; in all the outward acts of obedience and faith; in works of charity, self-denial and love, a death-bed of untroubled resignation, or triumphant joy—all these may be mistaken by the Unbeliever, and will be misunderstood, or misrepresented, by the Scoffer.

And yet, beyond all question, a change of heart may be of such a nature as to *prove itself* to the understandings of all who honestly desire to know the truth, and are accustomed to weighing evidence; in other words, to judging of men's motives, and purposes, by what are called appearances; there being no other evidence accessible to man; for what are actions, what is behavior, and what are professions, but appearances? Like a self-evident truth, or a notarial seal, under the law of

nations, a change of heart must be allowed to prove itself; because incapable of higher authentication.

For example: There is a proud, passionate, imperious man—a man of the world perhaps—a self-satisfied, unambitious man, or ambitious only of that approbation which he, himself, and all who are dependent on him, are ever ready to supply: frank and fearless; in good health and easy circumstances; attentive to business, whatever it may be, and faithful in the discharge of every trust and every duty, according to the judgment of those who are best acquainted with him: arrogant, rash, and with slight provocation, both quarrelsome and profane: and yet, with these and other like faults of temper, acknowledged to be magnanimous and forgiving, warm-hearted and generous; very much in earnest for the help of others, and always among the foremost, in every large and well-considered public enterprise: in short, judging by appearances—our only ground of judgment here—a strictly moral, though not a religious man; active and useful, though belonging to no party—as a party—in Church or State; upon the ground that whatever others may do, he cannot bring himself ‘to give up to the few what was meant for mankind’—yet he seldom goes to church; and never, as he, himself, acknowledges, never so much for his own sake, as for the sake of others; lest his example might be misunderstood or perverted, if he should not be seen there at all. Nor is he ever to be met with, or heard of, at any other kind of religious meeting; or occupied with religious conversation, or associating with religious people, or reading a religious book.

Though greatly prospered and blessed, year after year, no human being perhaps, not even his wife, the pleasant counsellor, and faithful companion of his early manhood, not one of all the many dear friends he has seen pass away from earth; not one of all the children he had watched over like a mother, in sickness and in health, by night and by day, had ever seen him in tears, or upon his knees: or never but once—according to his own acknowledgment—when, overwhelmed by a sudden burst of thankfulness, he knelt by the bedside of that young mother, and took her first child into his bosom.

If the Scriptures were ever opened, it was only as a magnificent poem; or as the secret hiding place of darkness, mystery and power; full of the wonders of a buried Past, the glories and the pomps, the temples and the idols, the thrones and sceptres of many a long-forgotten Empire: and Patriarchs and Priests, and Warriors and Prophets were passed in review before him, along with all the Host of Heaven; the Pharaohs and the Ptolemies, and the Spectres of Egypt and Assyria, of Babylon the great, and of Nineveh, as a continual procession of giant shadows—the phantasmagoria of another world—with feet among the deepest foundations of Earth, and with forehead among the Stars.

Would you inquire further, you find, that although he may not worship a golden image, like that of Nebuchadnezzar, nor a golden calf, nor the Queen of Heaven, yet hath he his idols among the constellations and the glories of Earth; and that within the very temple fashioned by the Everlasting Father for his own worship

— the heart of Man—he offereth continual sacrifice to them night and day, unseemly as they are.

You may learn, moreover, that he holds himself aloof and afar from the great unreasoning multitude ; that he has no fellowship with, nor sympathy for, any of the great leading associations for the spread of the Gospel : that he never opens a religious book or paper, but in the spirit of controversy or criticism ; that he glories in his own strength, and riots in what he calls a searching analysis—upon every subject but one, and that the only subject worthy of perpetual investigation ; that he, who is exceedingly slow of belief, and takes nothing for granted upon other questions, takes every-thing for granted upon this, and believes—while pretending to disbelieve—not only without evidence, but against evidence.

You find also that, happen what may, he is never down-hearted, nor wavering, nor self-distrustful ; nor ever seriously troubled, though admonished again and again, and visited with warnings and mercies by turns, year after year, and allowed to escape, year after year, the retributions of Earth, and the visible judgments of Heaven, while others are falling by generations about his path, up to the eleventh hour of a long, happy and laborious life.

But all at once, and without any apparent cause, the whole outward character of this haughty, imperious, and self-sufficient man is changed. They that know him best, acknowledge that he is no longer the same. All eyes are upon him, and the voices of them that have longest known him, die away in a whisper at his approach, and

their countenances are troubled ; but he heeds them not.

His family, friends, neighbors and associates in the business and pleasures of life, grow anxious and watchful, and shy, wondering what he will do next ; but as they have little or no sympathy for him, and no fellowship with him, to all their remonstrances, whether of look or speech, he answers nothing.

And now he begins to 'walk softly'—he whose very tread, but a little time before, sounded like a threat. That imperious, upright, almost martial bearing, for which he had always been remarkable, has become a stoop. His fiery, impatient, overbearing temper grows gentle and serious, thoughtful and yielding. The strongest of all his passions appears to be utterly quenched —to have gone out of itself. The lofty look, the loud voice, and the flashing eye, have disappeared. No longer a man of the world—living wholly for himself, and looking only to himself, and to the approbation of what he calls a conscience, though unenlightened, untroubled and neglected, or smothered, or stupified ; no longer ambitious, overbearing, fearless, passionate and profane, he grows timid, patient, self-distrustful ; and the pomp and vanities of Earth have no visible power over him. No unseemly word escapes him, under the greatest provocation, though taken wholly by surprise. Watch him ever so narrowly, and you find him, though always kind, courteous and considerate, charitable and hopeful for others, yet standing afar off, and apart from all those with whom he may have hitherto associated ; the men of the World, the ambitious, the renowned, the gifted

and the eloquent: and no longer 'first and foremost' in every great worldly undertaking, however vast and magnificent, or full of promise.

No longer 'mindful of the things that perish', nor even of his character as a man of business—if engaged in business—that character on which he most prided himself, perhaps, but the other day, he grows more and more negligent and forgetful, every week. His engagements are unheeded; his very letters lie unanswered, or peradventure, unopened, for days together; continual and very strange mistakes are found in all that he does; the very dates of his entries are wrong, and familiar names are forgotten.

Wholly pre-occupied, and possessed, by one great, growing and overmastering persuasion, the man of business, like the man of the world, vanishes like a shadow. Forgetting the injunction to be 'not slothful in business', he contents himself with being *only* 'fervent in prayer'. Should he be disturbed in the loneliness, to which he has withdrawn, forever, as he hopes and believes, by the shadow of a disappointed creditor, instead of being overwhelmed with mortification, or greatly distressed for himself, he is only sorry to be the cause of such unseemly earnestness in a fellow-creature, on his way through the valley of the shadow of death, where the 'wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest'. Instead of energetic and timely preparation, as hitherto, he gives himself no uneasiness whatever; and if sharply questioned, he contents himself with signifying that he has done with business forever: that he has no desire to gather up riches, having enough and to spare of this

world's goods ; that if his debts are provided for, principal and interest, as he believes they are, to the uttermost farthing, and his wife and children left in comfortable, though very moderate circumstances, he shall be satisfied ; and that, meanwhile, if his few creditors are uneasy, or unwilling to wait for a few months, or years, he cannot say which, they are at liberty to help themselves—and then, perhaps, while the stranger stands before him bewildered and astonished at the composure he sees, or wondering what will be the end of such a piteous hallucination, he turns away, as if he heard the wind rising afar off, or a ground swell just ready to break over the last barrier, and lets every-thing go by the board. Like one cast ashore, after a long and wearisome struggle with the surges of the Great Deep, all he asks for now, is to left alone with God, that he may die in peace.

And now, his health begins to fail ; and his familiar friends acknowledge, in a low whisper, when he goes by them in the great thoroughfare of life, that he is wasting away. Once very particular in matters of dress and personal appearance, he grows absent-minded, careless and slovenly : He listens to the suggestions of a wife, or child, as if they were strangers ; lying hour after hour upon the sofa, without opening his mouth, and utterly heedless of all that may be going on about him. Palleness, trembling, and a pitiable indecision of look, manner and speech, follow, as if he does not clearly understand what is expected of him. He cannot sleep—he who had never lost a night, by watching, in all his life, unless by the sick-bed of another ; he, who could throw him-

self upon a bench, in the midst of children at play, or of strangers talking earnestly together, and sleep at will.

Determined not to give up, he darkens all the windows at night—buries himself in the bed-clothes—turns his face to the wall, and tries, hour after hour, to lie motionless, and to breathe naturally, lest he may disturb a beloved wife: and, at last, if worn out with watching, he should lose himself but for a few moments, he wakes all of a sudden, covered with a cold perspiration, or troubled by noises he never heard before, though always about him after dark; or rises at dead of night, and steals away to a distant chamber, and there—overcome, perhaps, with a vague terror—falls upon his knees, and with ‘groanings that cannot be uttered’, prays to the Father of all Mercies, that he may not be allowed to go distracted. Like Lear, he begins to feel the hurrying darkness of another world, bearing him away, faster and faster, toward the great unfathomable gulph, where the mightiest have been shipwrecked, and the very Seraphim quenched forever, and breaks forth in that deplorable and bitter cry of the dethroned monarch—

‘O let me not be mad ! not mad, sweet Heaven !
Keep me in temper. I would not be mad.’

God hears him—and he sleeps. He rises greatly refreshed and strengthened; although uneasy and wakeful, and covered with dampness like that of the death-bed.

He now begins to labor with ‘fear and trembling’; to beseech the Almighty and Everlasting Father to have

mercy upon him, and comfort and help him, for the sake of his Beloved Son.

His eyes being opened, he now begins, not only to see, but to feel, the darkness round about him; and turning away from Earth, and the allurements of Earth, is wholly occupied with one great question; and upon that, although he can think of nothing else, being disqualified by over-anxiety, he cannot make up his mind.

No longer satisfied with himself, nor with the character universally conceded to him by others, he begins to see and feel, and soon after to acknowledge, with tears, perhaps, and to comparative strangers, that he has indeed lived to little purpose; that so far from being what he appeared, he has been wholly misunderstood, even by those who believed they knew him best; that as for himself, he has been all his life long under a frightful delusion: and that, just where he had been most frequently held up, for an example to others, even there has he been most undeserving, or untrustworthy. That all his endowments, gifts and blessings, have been abused, or perverted, or neglected; that he has never been faithful in his high-stewardship, as a husband, or as a father, as a friend, or as a neighbor: nor ever truly thankful, notwithstanding his professions, to the Giver of every good gift: and that, in the discharge of duties growing out of his relationship to others, he has hitherto tried to satisfy himself only, and fallen far short of what he now acknowledges to have been but 'a reasonable service' to God, to his fellow-man, and especially to those round about him, and subjected in any way, no matter how, to his authority, guardianship or influence; here betraying

or neglecting, and there abandoning altogether his high charge ; always falling short, and chiefly where he had most prided himself upon his faithfulness and steadfastness.

And now '*Behold he prayeth!*'—and prayeth openly. Jehovah hath passed before him, not with the strong wind that rends the mountains, and breaks the rocks, not in tempest and in fire, not in thunder or in earthquake, but with the gentle whispering, the 'still small voice' of a compassionate Father.

And now the Bible opens of itself at his approach—burning with inward light—and he is filled with a new sense and a new hope. The fear of God is within him, and round about him, like a holier atmosphere ! not a slavish fear—not so much a dread of his wrath—as an overwhelming weight of self-reproach for past unthankfulness—and a deep yearning for that perfect love which 'casteth out fear'.

Sermons and tracts are now found lying about his chamber ; and they are read no longer in the spirit of gladiatorial controversy ; and as for criticism, he would as soon think of criticising the sky itself, or a thunder-storm among the mountains, or a rising anthem of the sea.

Baxter and Bunyan, and other like Teachers, undergo a transfiguration. They are understood for the first time, as the '*Pilgrim's Progress*' changes from an allegory to a revelation, and the '*Saint's Rest*' begins to fashion for itself a sort of rhythm—a deep, solemn, inward music, and to fill his heart with a continual chant or hymning very sweet and clear to him, though inaudible to others,

and somewhat mournful ; but he breathes freely, and sleeps quietly, and is comforted.

And now that look of downcast weariness and self-distrust vanishes. Another spirit possesses him. He goes about the business of life, not slothfully, but with a new strength, and a higher purpose. Undismayed, undisheartened, upborne as with wings ; and cheerful with a quiet and serious cheerfulness, he shrinks from no duty, however irksome or unpalatable. New truths are emblazoned about his path. To deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly—since every-where, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted—to love our neighbor as ourself—and to do as we would be done by—according to the law and the Gospel ; this he believes to be not only the teaching, but the sum and substance of all Revelation.

The Bible is now another Sky: the Sky itself but another Bible. Other changes follow fast. Religious help is wanted: the sympathy and companionship of religious people are sought for. Questionable habits are abandoned ; enemies are forgiven ; acknowledgments are made, atonements offered, and forgiveness entreated of the unrelenting. Secret and social prayer follow, and family worship, with visits to the anxious and the troubled, to the sick and the dying, the bereaved and the mourning.

On the Lord's day, he is found morning, noon and night within the gates of the sanctuary, and between Sabbath, at all the conferences, prayer-meetings and lectures ; or engaged in promoting the cause of Sabbath-schools and Bible-classes, of missionary and tract asso-

ciations, and of religious training, both at home and abroad; by public addresses, or by conversation, or by writing for the newspapers, or by contributing of his substance.

In a word—the man appears to have undergone a thorough and most astonishing change. All see it, and believe, and acknowledge it; and nobody thinks of denying it.

And what has changed him? Was it bereavement, or sickness, or peril? or the near approach of death? or the loss of property, or station, or friends? or influence? or character?

If it were these, or any of these—or disappointed ambition, or sorrow, as God works by instrumentalities, it would never show the change to be less real, though it might be less wonderful, or less unexpected, and perhaps more liable to misapprehension.

In the course of a long and eventful, or adventurous life, he must have been called upon to bear sorrow and calamity, bereavement and trial; he must have alienated friends, lost property, and with it, of course, character, influence and station; but who ever saw him before, with a troubled countenance? or with glistening lashes? Who ever saw him down-hearted, or trembling, or weak, or in tears, till now? And who ever said of him before, in all his life—‘*Behold he prayeth?*’

Under such circumstances, whither shall we go for explanation?

Here is what, after months of experience and observation, all agree to call a change of the outward man, at least, if nothing more; and Believers, a change of heart.

When the party himself is questioned, he declares only that he has not recovered from his astonishment—all he pretends to know, is, that whereas he was blind, now he sees: that he had been blind from his birth: and that the change was never wrought within him by terror; but by a sense of unworthiness, and of unthankfulness, alike astonishing and unaccountable; for he acknowledges in the bitterness of self-reproach, that he would not willingly associate with any man who should be convicted of such unthankfulness toward any earthly Father—if that were possible—as he himself had been guilty of, all his life long, toward a Heavenly Father.

But you, my dear friend, being without experience in such matters, are not so easily satisfied. It may be all a mistake, you say. It may be hallucination.

Granted.

And you require other proof—other evidence before you give up—evidence that never can be had; evidence that no human understanding would ever be capable of estimating or weighing: for what is it after all that you require?—what is it, stripped of all subterfuge and pretence? Nothing less than this—evidence—evidence that *cannot be questioned*—of another man's sincerity! *proof* that a fellow creature is not laboring under hallucination or mistake! and proof too, that *cannot be questioned*? for inasmuch as the very best evidence—that of the man himself—may be questioned, and will continue to be questioned by the Unbeliever; and as the very wasting of bodily strength, and the paleness, the trembling, the tears, and the sleeplessness you see, may have proceeded from other causes, who but the Omnis-

cient God himself, the Searcher of hearts, can be *sure* of the truth ?

If we appeal to the past character of the party—to his acknowledged manliness and truthfulness ; if we argue that, having passed through both conditions—that of the Unbeliever, and that of the Believer—he cannot be mistaken ; having a knowledge that no Unbeliever can have, till he himself has become a Believer : that among a multitude waiting to be operated upon, for blindness from their birth, he only who has been cured, can testify from knowledge and experience ; the opinions of all the rest being worthless ; for what can they know of light—or even of darkness—who have never had their eyes opened for a moment ; nor felt their desolation ? you answer with a compassionate smile, or a shake of the head : as if the question were not fairly stated, or honestly argued.

But beware. Men asleep, often believe themselves awake : but who, that was awake, ever thought himself asleep ?

Should he give up his life, and go down meekly and patiently into the grave, would that satisfy you ? Probably not ; for the ‘Noble Army of Martyrs’ are not believed—the ‘great congregation of the risen dead’ are not listened to. What Man was, in the day of our Saviour upon earth—having Moses and the Prophets for Teachers—that is he now ; so that, unhelped of the Holy Spirit, he would not believe, though one should rise from the dead. To him, it would be but a vision of the night ; and even though he looked upon the countenance, and knew it ; and though he heard the unforgotten voice

of a brother, or the dry bones rattling underneath his feet, as the awful messenger swept by, still he would not believe! He would rather glory in the strength of mind, that enabled him to disbelieve, and mock at the whole, as a phantom of indigestion, or fever. At noon-day, if that dead brother should stand suddenly before him, though he might quake and tremble at the apparition, he would be ashamed to acknowledge, even to himself, that it was anything more than a most astonishing resemblance ; and if sorely pressed, would sooner believe that the brother himself, whom he had seen buried, was yet living.

But we must go further. Questions like these are not to be slurred over. You profess to be much in earnest. You desire to know the truth ; and where you do not believe, you claim to be a reasoning and thoughtful Unbeliever. My errand, therefore, is with you.

Let us now look at the other phase of your objection. There might be other causes, you say. Very true. But if, after the most diligent and faithful search, you cannot find other causes, are you at liberty to suppose them, nevertheless ? Would such a course of procedure be honest, or safe, in any other case ? Are you to withhold your assent, until, you are furnished with evidence, which the very nature of the question will never admit of ? Would this be just ? Would it be reasonable ? Why not be satisfied with that evidence which is held to be conclusive, by the highest earthly tribunals, in matters of life and death—in the business of Senate-Chambers—in the welfare of Kingdoms—that which is called the best evidence which the nature of the case

admits of? evidence of such a character, that none better may be supposed to lie behind it? Are you acting wisely, to require impossibilities, for the satisfaction of your doubts, upon a question of such overwhelming importance to yourself? Must the dead, who have testified by their death, and by their doings, come forth alive, to testify? And if they did—think well of your answer—how know you that you would believe?

If the character of the party mentioned has been what I have supposed, frank and fearless; if well known, and long passed the age of mere adventure and experiment; and not only, so far as others may judge, not only unambitious, but unpopular, with little or nothing to desire of his fellow-men, beyond their sympathy and good will; would it be fair, would it be just, would it be reasonable, to charge him with counterfeiting? ‘Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?’ Hath not the Saviour himself said, ‘By their *fruits* ye shall know them?’ And what more would you have? What more *could* you have? Under all other circumstances, you are satisfied with the very evidence, which here, though it may concern the everlasting welfare of yourself, and of all that belong to you, and of all that in any way are subjected to your influence, or example, you are dissatisfied with. Is not this very strange, even to yourself? And not being able to satisfy yourself, even by that evidence, which would satisfy you in any other case, and upon which you act in all the business of life, you propose—yet more strangely—to suspend your opinion.

But this you cannot do. No mortal can suspend his opinion—though he may refuse to acknowledge it, even

to himself, by refusing to give it shape—with such evidence before him. He may delay the decision; but that very delay is, of itself, a decision: and what is more, a decision against the evidence, and against himself, and all his hopes hereafter; and every time he is put upon inquiry, by the warnings or the whisperings, the judgments or the mercies of God, by refusing to say *Yes*—he does in effect say *No*. There can be no neutrals here. He that is not on the Lord's side is against him: and yet more effectually against him, perhaps, than if he waged open war upon his followers; for then, he would be dealt with, as an acknowledged adversary.

But you cannot be sure. Very true. And as God only can read the secrets of the human heart, He only can be sure. How long, therefore, do you propose to suspend your opinion? Or rather, how long do you propose to withhold an acknowledgment of your decision? Till you have become a Searcher of hearts yourself? or till Jehovah has delegated to you one of his leading attributes, and one which would be likely to draw after it all the others—Omniscience being but one aspect of Omnipotence.

And now, you entrench yourself anew, by saying that, although the party himself may be honest enough, and to all appearance, outwardly changed, still there may be no inward change, and he, himself, though honest, may be mistaken.

Granted. Such a terrible mistake may happen. Of this, we are assured by God himself. We may be led to believe a lie. And what then? Is there no such thing as truth? no such thing as true spiritual regeneration?

Because one who has been couched for the cataract, may be led to mistake the feeble glimmer of a darkened chamber for the light of noon, will that show that others who were blind from their birth, and now go about all the business of life, without help, have not been successfully operated upon ? If there be any such thing as regeneration—spiritual regeneration—or any such thing as the restoration of sight—can it ever be proved, unless we have faith in Man—or faith in God ?

Allow me to put a case for your consideration. I would have you judge for yourself: but if your understanding is to be enlightened, or your heart strengthened, you must be careful to distinguish between *possibilities*, and *probabilities*.

If we refuse to believe, so long as there may be a possibility of error, we must hear and see every thing for ourselves; and even then, as we know that we cannot always trust to the evidence of our senses, what can we believe, since there may always be a *possibility* of deception, or mistake.

How know we that there is any such city on earth, as Constantinople ? Have we ever been there ? and if we had lived there all our lives long, would that be proof, beyond the *possibility* of mistake ? Have not others been deceived, or misled—by misapprehension, or craft, or conspiracy ?

And yet we believe ; and we act and reason as if we knew, of our own knowledge, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that all we have heard from others about Constantinople, must be substantially true, and cannot be ‘a cunningly devised fable’.

And why? Because, in weighing evidence, we look at *probabilities*, instead of *possibilities*, in all that concerns our happiness here; and act accordingly.

Let me suppose that somewhere, a great way off, among a strange people, a physician should be called to a case entirely new. Nothing that he has ever met with, or heard of, in all his life, corresponds with what he now sees. Being watchful, inquisitive, patient and conscientious, with no opportunity for consultation, he records the symptoms, or diagnostics, from hour to hour, and from day to day, and having completed the history, lays it aside for future reference.

And let me further suppose, that in different ages, and in all parts of the world, the very same thing had happened to others, who for like reasons had kept similar records, without any acquaintance with one another, and without intercommunication; that after awhile, these records and histories are brought together and compared; and that after a long and faithful examination, the symptoms are found to agree in every distinguishing peculiarity. Would you not infer, from such identity of symptoms, identity of disease, ailment or affection? If you are a medical man, acquainted with the groundwork, history and growth of medical science, you cannot do otherwise; or you abandon all hope, and acknowledge medicine to be but another name for the worst of quackery. Are you a plain, straight-forward reasoner, unacquainted with any other science than that which enables you to judge for yourself about the common business of life; and wholly uncommitted upon the question—you are obliged to decide in the affirmative;

or to acknowledge that your wisest calculations are but guess-work ; that water *may* run up hill without help ; that bonfires may be made of snow-balls ; and that nothing is to be learned by experience.

Would it be safe—would it be reasonable—would it be in accordance with what we ever do in the management of our business, or the formation of our opinions—to suppose that *all* the sufferers had been afflicted with an imaginary ailment ? Or, that they had been carried away by sympathy—being strangers, and far apart—or by self-deception ?

All the cases, being by supposition what are called sporadic, and not epidemic ; unassociated and unfrequent, instead of being simultaneous and common ; scattered over the whole earth, and among every people, in every age, and under every possible variety of circumstances, instead of being confined to either sex, or to any particular condition, race, or age ; and the subjects, or sufferers, being moreover, by the supposition, not only strangers, but wholly unacquainted with the fact, that others had ever been troubled in the same way—what opportunity would there be, for the influence of imagination, or sympathy ?

And although, upon further inquiry, it should afterwards turn out, that cases of a similar character had always been happening, and had always been known to the better informed : that instead of being ‘ few and far between ’, like ‘ angel visits ’, they have sometimes overswept whole neighborhoods, and visited by turns almost every nation of the earth ; still, if these facts are not known to the sufferers, nor to their physicians, it would

not lessen the value of their testimony, nor that of the records thus brought together. At most, it would only show their ignorance, while it corroborated their truthfulness.

After the Cholera asphyxia, or Asiatic Cholera, had become an epidemic, there was room for all the mischief to be apprehended from terror, sympathy or imagination ; but so long as the cases were few and far off ; so long as they were unreported, unheard of, or disbelieved, it was not so. Each case must have been a startling anomaly ; to be judged of by itself alone. As well might one argue that the yellow-fever was a sheer hallucination, or the plague, a sympathetic influence, or the bilious cholera, described by Sydenham, in 1675, so frightful in its ravages, and so nearly resembling that great Eastern pestilence, which, one hundred and fifty years later, overswept the whole earth, empire after empire, was dependent upon self-deception, terror, sympathy or collusion.

And even if it were otherwise—if all these terrible afflictions were propagated by sympathy, imagination, or terror, how would that help the matter ? Would they be any the less fatal ; or less to be dreaded by the sons of men, or a whit more manageable ? And would not the question occur, at every step—How did they originate ?

Do yellow-fever patients deceive themselves, or conspire to deceive others ? Honest they may be—but how do they know they have got the fever ? If you will not take their word for it, nor the word of others familiar with the symptoms, how are you ever to be satisfied, *until you have had it yourself?*

Unless you have had some experience—are capable of reasoning; and know whither to go for information, and how to weigh the evidence—what business have you with the question? and how can you ever hope to be satisfied?

Perhaps, the distinguishing characteristic of a great mind is, the power of detecting resemblances, where others see only differences, or differences, where others see only resemblances. The naturalist, who sees that in a shell, or a flower, which connects it with one family, while it distinguishes it from every other: and the comparative anatomist, who cannot be misled, nor deceived, by the fragment of a bone or a tooth, must have a delicate appreciation of what others overlook among the rubbish of accidental, or circumstantial testimony; and in this way only, are they both enabled to show their innate aptitude. The botanist detects at a glance that which links the smallest rose with the apple-blossom, or the blackberry; not because both are flowers, for that were the judgment of the multitude; but because both belong to the same household of flowers; and that which never fails to distinguish them from every other household, however much alike they may be to the common eye.

And so with the mineralogist, and the physician; with the moralist and with the religious inquirer. They must be able to distinguish, and to generalize, to separate and to bring together; to cast aside, or to overlook, whatever may be found either out of place, or unessential to the immediate purpose of their investigation; just as the well-educated, healthy eye, instead of seeing too

much at once, and all things, whether afar off or near, large or small, at the same distance, like the newly couched for a cataract, has learned *not* to see, as well as to see, whenever its whole attention is needed to a particular point—whether turned to the blue vault above, ‘fretted with golden fires’—the multiplying constellations of a boundless and fathomless empyrean—or concentrated upon the purple shadows, and fiery dust, of a butterfly’s wing, the steely corselet of a warrior-beetle, or the golden plumage of a moth.

If therefore, in looking for evidence of a change of heart, from long before the day of Pentecost, up to the present hour, you can be satisfied, as a reasonable and thoughtful man, having a deep interest in the question, with such evidence, as you are not only governed by, but *satisfied* with, in all the business of life, and in all that you are led to do, or say ; carefully distinguishing between accessaries and essentials, accidents and characteristics, you need not flinch from the inquiry, nor delay it ; for upon the supposition that you are honest—and faithful to yourself—that you are patient, earnest and teachable ; that you have some belief in the records of the Past and Present, and some faith in Man—God has nothing to fear—nor have you—from the severest logic, and the sharpest questioning, of the mightiest among Unbelievers.

But do this—and do it, with humility and reverence—with Godly fear—and loye—and, as the Lord liveth, you shall be answered as the Lawgivers, and Prophets, and Patriarchs of old were answered, out of the whirlwind or the sea, with the still small voice, and patient

whispering of Almighty love, or with the tempestuous brightness, and heavy thunderings of Almighty power.

Be but steadfast, humble and hopeful, and you will be sure to find good and sufficient reasons for believing, that what is called a new birth—regeneration—or a change of heart, is very common—among the commonest of the continued miracles of our Great Father: that it may be demonstrated, as clearly as most of our bodily affections; and that it may be distinguished, as certainly, from all counterfeits and pretences: for however much the body may differ from the Soul—or physiology from psychology—they have this in common with the very atmosphere we breathe, and with the constellations above, that they are capable of being registered and remembered, compared and weighed; so that, their simplest manifestations, like some of their largest phenomena, are within the grasp of our understandings.

Now, I do aver that I have seen such a case—I might say two or three such cases; for they were substantially alike, in all their distinguishing characteristics; and that so far as the parties themselves knew any thing of what was to foretell, or accompany, or follow, a change of heart, I do *know* in one case, and I do *believe* in the other cases, upon evidence which no sound, patient reasoner would ever think of questioning, that what did happen from day to day, was not only unexpected, but contrary to what they were looking for, and hoping for.

At one and the same time, there were misgivings upon the very same points, where no communication had been held between the parties, either directly or indi-

rectly upon these points ; and the discovery was made, not by design, but providentially ; while they were reading together a little book,* as the author himself wishes it to be read, chapter by chapter, with intervals for meditation, reference to scripture, and secret prayer ; and while they were consulting together upon the points referred to—certain doubts which sprung up in their hearts, or minds, at the same instant. The eyes of one fell upon a passage in the chapter he was about to read for the first time, which enabled both to see, and at the same instant, that these very misgivings, however unaccountable, were among the essential, the peculiar, and the distinguishing characteristics of their case ; that others—a great multitude of men, women, and children—of all ages and conditions, and in all countries, had been troubled in the same way, and tormented by the very same dark shadows. Their secret, unacknowledged fears, they saw, to their unspeakable amazement, and both at once, not only put into language, but printed, and spread out before their eyes ; and the prayers which they had never breathed aloud to the ears of mortal man, and were almost afraid to acknowledge to themselves, they beheld set before them, in the language of another.

Yet more. Although both were without religious experience, and knew of a ‘trembling hope’, only by hearsay, or common report, both had been led to believe that joy—joy in some shape—joy unspeakable—and nothing but joy—was to be looked for, as the sign of acceptance and the seal of truth ; and that, although such new hope might not always break forth in songs

* James's Anxious Inquirer.

and shoutings, nor in tumultuous acknowledgments, or audible thanksgiving, still, if it was a safe, justifiable, well-grounded hope, there would be joy, deep-felt, earnest and solemn joy, a serene, comforting, tranquillizing assurance, never to be mistaken.

They were strengthened in this belief, too, by the language they heard from others, deeply interested, and of large experience, who sought to encourage them by foretelling, that if they were hopeful, and patient, and submissive, they would be sure to 'come out bright'.

Notwithstanding this belief, and these well-meant assurances, they waited and hoped, week after week, without feeling the presence of the Comforter, as a joy and brightness, but rather as an overshadowing; a deep, serious, and ever-growing thoughtfulness and self-reproach. Not unhappy were they; but their happiness had nothing in it of the joy that had been so long waited for, and so often foretold. They were disappointed; and both at the same time, and in the same way, as thousands have been before, and thousands will be hereafter, so long as but one aspect of God's manifestations to the children of men, shall continue to be mistaken for what it never was, and never will be, to the infinitely varied wants of our nature and character; the only sign of acceptance, and the only seal of truth.

But in the trouble—not to say the anguish, and the darkness, that followed their disappointment, it happened, to their unspeakable relief, that on referring the question to their pastor, he was enabled to assure them that he had known a multitude of cases—four or five hundred perhaps, where the solemnity had continued throughout,

and sometimes, even to melancholy or sadness, month after month ; and that some had lived years, and others gone down to the grave, with a continually growing seriousness, devout believers, and faithful christians, judging by all that could be known of them here ; but owing, perhaps, to constitutional peculiarities, never cheerful. The joy of such would be a serious joy—too deeply felt, perhaps, to be acknowledged within the hearing of mortal man.

Without stopping to show the danger of looking for signs, in one quarter of the sky only : or the mischief that may be done, by leading the troubled spirit to look for only one kind of manifestation : or the mistake that is made by Christians, who keep the secret of their happiness to themselves—and are believed to be unhappy, not because they ‘die and make no sign’ ; but because they *live* and make no sign ; and for refusing to be cheerful and gracious, or sympathetic and courteous, are believed to be wretched ; or at any rate, no true Christians—the highest possible testimony, by the way, that men of the world can offer to the spirit of Christianity, which, rightly understood, is but another name for everlasting cheerfulness : without stopping to argue these, or any other questions that would naturally arise here, of a subordinate nature, let us now come directly to the point.

Bear with me, I beseech you. Follow me patiently, and step by step, while the summing up of all that has been urged, is faithfully presented for your consideration : and then decide for yourself. I shall have nothing more to say.

Now—unless these two persons, husband and wife, were self-deceived, or laboring each to deceive the other, upon the same subject, at the same time, and in the same way, they were under a new and strange influence, unlike any they had ever felt before: and if they were self-deceived, or carried away by sympathy, when there was no stir, no solemnity, nothing unusual at work among their friends or associates, and no symptoms of a revival in the church or congregation, or neighborhood, or city where they lived: or if they were influenced by terror, either vague or definite, of impending, or distant calamity, or by imagination—how would it ever be possible to show that a change of heart—or the cholera, the yellow-fever, or the plague, though isolated and sporadic, was not the result of sympathy, imagination, or terror?

And supposing the change to be, indeed and in truth, a spiritual regeneration—the work of supernatural power—how otherwise could it be proved, than by the testimony of the parties themselves, corroborated by their behaviour? Is not the evidence furnished—I appeal to you, my friend, as a logician, as a patient, honest reasoner—is it not, after all, the best evidence the nature of the case admits of? And if so, why insist upon more? Would you have the witnesses work wonders, to satisfy you? And if they did—how know you that you would not look upon them as ‘lying wonders’? at the best, as but a more adroit jugglery; just as the Egyptians did, upon the greater power of Aaron, when their soothsayers and magicians strove with him, face to face? Their rods became serpents too—and the only difference, in the judgment of Pharaoh and his host, was,

that Aaron appeared to be the greater magician, and altogether too much for his brethren. Else had they resisted no longer.

But, although you have heard of the Pharaohs and the Ptolemies; of the Cæsars and the Caliphs; of Assyria, and of Egypt, and Babylon—you do not believe in them, perhaps? Not having seen them with your own eyes—not having handled and weighed all the evidence that relates to them—history being so unsafe, and all human testimony so liable to error—you feel bound to withhold your belief—for the present—or until you are able to satisfy yourself?

If so, how dare you believe anything? The Past, and the Future, and all the Present, upon which you cannot lay your hands—and keep them there—must be a blank to you; a dreary and hopeless blank.

How know you, for example, that there is any such city on earth as Timbuctoo?—or Canton?—or St. Petersburg?—or Constantinople, or London, or Paris, or Washington? Have you ever been there?

And if you had been there—what then? What could you know, but from the testimony of others? after you had explored them thoroughly—after you had visited all their archives—handled their deepest foundations—and compared and weighed the accumulated testimony of ages; what could you really know, of yourself, but for your faith in Man? but for your belief in that very evidence which you turn away from, or scoff at, when applied to a question that you are bound to settle for yourself, before it is too late; because, for aught you know, it *may* involve your everlasting welfare. You

would not even be sure that you had found them—that you knew their names—that you had not mistaken one for the other—Jeddo, or the city of Washington itself perhaps, for Timbuctoo ?

One word more. In all the business of life, which of the two—the man of experience, or the man without experience—do you put your trust in? If you were seeking to understand how disappointment and sorrow, or failing health, or thwarted ambition, or the loss of property, or friends, or character, would operate on the mind or heart of man—other qualifications being alike—to which would you go? To the ever-prosperous man? to the untried and spared, wholly unacquainted with calamity?—or to the ‘Man of sorrow and acquainted with grief?’ to him who had been tried long and patiently in the furnace of affliction? to the bereaved and the mourning? the shipwrecked and the impoverished? to him, who having tasted of more than the bitterness of death in the loss of character, or friends, or the deep working of disappointed ambition, would be willing to lay his heart naked before you, and leave you to judge for yourself?

Is it certainty or conjecture, theory or practice, that you would require?

In other words—the testimony of which man would you prefer, upon the question at issue: that of one who *had not*—or that of one who professed to believe that he *had*—undergone what is called a change of heart?

Other circumstances being equal, he who has had experience of both conditions, would be likely to furnish the best evidence—would he not?—for how could he,

who had the experience of but one of these two conditions, help you?

In other words—until you yourself were converted, how could you satisfy yourself? Would you not be obliged to depend altogether, and always, upon the testimony of others?

You have only to apply the same rules of investigation to spiritual things, which you make use of upon all other questions, and in all the business of life, whatever may be its nature, even to that which may be a matter of life or death here, if not hereafter.

You are to believe upon proper evidence—well weighed, carefully compared, and honestly judged of—upon evidence, which would satisfy you in matters of deep seriousness, where property, health, life, or character were in issue.

Where you have no personal experience yourself, there you *must* believe upon the experience of others; or not believe at all.

What would you think of a man, who, professing a desire to understand the truth about a landscape—the tinting of sky and earth, or the grouping of trees, and the changeable brightness of many waters, should consult a stranger who had never seen it, or another blind from his birth? Or of him, who being very anxious to learn French, or German, should confine his inquiries to people who had never studied either language, never heard either spoken, and had no belief in either?

Yet this, my friend, is just what you do, when you allow yourself to weigh the opinions of inexperienced

men, however trustworthy, against the experience of others, acknowledged to be *as* trustworthy. You prefer the guess-work and hearsay of men like yourself, and therefore blind from their birth, so far as this great question is in issue, to the solemn declaration of eye-witnesses, alike unimpeached, and unimpeachable.

But again I say, Beware ! Men asleep often believe themselves awake ; but no waking man ever believed himself asleep.

But you, wanting information of the utmost importance, go to the man asleep ; and then, to make all sure, you insist upon his not being disturbed, lest, if he should wake up, he might disqualify himself, by testifying from experience.

You must acknowledge that a man who believes himself to be changed, whether deceived or not, has an experience of some sort, which he never had before ; and which no other man, who has never believed *himself* changed, ever had.

If you honestly desire to be enlightened, to which of these two would you apply ?

The inexperienced, like little children, have their opinions : the more experienced, theirs. But what do little children ever know of the feelings of men and women, fully matured, and rejoicing in their strength ?

‘When I was a child’, says the great Apostle to the Gentiles, ‘I spake as a child, I *understood as a child*, I *thought as a child*, but when I became a MAN, I put away childish things’.

Yet men and women, having once been children, and having experience of both conditions, are well acquainted

with the feelings and opinions of children, just as the higher intelligences of the upper world may be acquainted with our feelings, our hopes, our opinions, and our wishes, though we know little or nothing of theirs.

Would it be wise of you, my dear friend, to inquire of children, about the workings of unhallowed ambition, the lust of power, the appetites, the wants, or the leading characteristics, of a Napoleon or a Cæsar, a Washington or a Webster?

And why not—unless you hold them to be disqualified by their inexperience?

But, as I have said before—all beginners are children: and therefore, all who have not begun, are less than children, whatever may be their age, talents or character; and wholly incompetent. And therefore, instead of being questioned by those, who are honestly desirous of knowing the truth, are not to be listened to, without danger.

Are the blind to lecture, not upon the great governing laws of light, with Sanderson, who demonstrated, among other things, that it was better to be born blind, since the other faculties were sharpened thereby, and the sense of touch was not confined to a single organ, or a single nerve, but diffused over the whole body, and capable of doing what the eye could not do, as he proved, by measuring with his fingers, instantaneously, the length of a scratch made by the graver upon a polished steel plate, which, to the unassisted eye, appeared faultless—Are they to lecture, not upon these great laws, of which even the blindest may obtain a knowledge, by the help of others who are not blind; but upon the mutabi-

lity of colors, upon the light and shadow drifting over a wide reach of summer landscape, with surging grass and tumbling water-falls, or upon the ever-changing wonders of a northern sky ?

And if they lecture, are you to listen patiently ? and put your trust in their speculations ? or hazard aught upon the soundness of their opinions ?

Yet this very thing you do in spiritual matters. You sit under the teachings of people who do not even pretend to see—hazarding your whole happiness, here and hereafter, it may be, upon the soundness of their conjectures.

Would you be satisfied with such information as you might be likely to obtain, by inquiring of your next door neighbors, about the nature and employment of Angels and Archangels, of Cherubim and Seraphim ?—What know they, more than you, of these high matters ? Both are without experience. You cannot help one another, till you have undergone a transfiguration.

And yet, professing honestly to desire a better acquaintance with spiritual things, you content yourself with questioning others, as inexperienced as yourself. You inquire about a change of heart—and of whom ? Not of the changed, but of the unchanged ?

And you ask to be believed, when you aver that you are desirous of knowing the truth ! Beware, my friend. Man may deceive himself. He may deceive others. But God he cannot deceive : and God ‘will not be mocked’—of this we may be very sure, without the help of the Bible.

But you may be of those, and their name is legion, who try to persuade themselves—and others—that as

Man ‘believeth in his heart unto Salvation’, therefore, as he *may believe in his heart*, whether upon much or little evidence, or no evidence at all, and after much, or no inquiry, *so it is*: relying upon the words of Paul, where he says. ‘To him who esteemeth anything unclean, to him, it is unclean’: although he adds, ‘I know and am persuaded that there is nothing unclean of itself. * * * Nevertheless, he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith.’ Rom. xiv: 14, 23: or, peradventure, upon these words, ‘For as he thinketh in his heart, *so is he*.’

But aside from the pitiable misapprehension, or perversion of a clear, self-evident truth, you know that if you thrust your hand into that fire, it will burn you, whatever you may believe, or not believe; and that if you cast yourself down headlong from the pinnacle of the Temple, you will be dashed to pieces, whatever may be your opinion—private or published—of the errors in Sir Isaac Newton’s theory of gravitation.

May it not be worth your while, to satisfy yourself by inquiries in the right quarter, before you try any such hazardous experiment?

Depend upon it, my friend, there are such cities on earth as London, Paris, Constantinople and St. Petersburg, whatever you may suppose to the contrary, after conversing with all your neighbors, who not having seen them, have therefore no faith in them.

And now to the point.

Are you certain there is no such thing as a change of heart? Absolutely certain that there is no need of such a change in yourself? Have you honestly inquired?

Have you tried to satisfy yourself in the only safe way ?—by questioning them that know ?

And after all—what if you should be mistaken ? Would that make any difference in the result ?—Have you done your utmost ?—*Are you sure ?*

There are those who are equally certain, and upon just as good authority, if they themselves are to be believed, that there is no God—no Saviour—no Hereafter—no Judgment—no Heaven—no Hell.

But if they should happen to find themselves mistaken at last—what then ?

Would their belief or disbelief change the fact—or the consequences ?

My friend !—my brother ! If you are thirty years of age, you have outlived nearly one thousand millions of mankind : if sixty, nearly two thousand millions.

Have you never tried to understand why you have been spared—with so many millions of chances against you ?

In other words, have you never thought of asking yourself what you were created for—what you are preserved for—and what you are good for ?

If not—You have no time to lose.

OBJECTIONS WEIGHED.

1. But professing Christians—brethren—claiming to be the People of God; to belong to the Household of Faith; to be not only better, but wiser than their neighbors, do not agree among themselves. They are always disputing together, and always about essentials, or non-essentials: If, as they pretend, it is always about essentials, what must be the real character of their faith? And if, on the contrary, it is about non-essentials, what sort of Christians must they be? In either case, why dispute among themselves? And how can we, the people of the world, who do not claim to be wiser or better than our neighbors, and have no self-righteousness to boast of—how can we be expected to make up our minds, with so little time for search? ‘Who shall decide where doctors disagree?’

Very fair, and very much to the purpose. But can you name a subject about which men do not disagree—conscientious, able, patient, sober-minded men? Does this prevent you from having an opinion of your own, whenever you think it worth your while?

If you are about sending a ship to sea—or going abroad—or getting married—or accepting a trust, do

you suspend your opinion, till your neighbors and friends, who take a deep interest in your undertaking, and welfare, have all agreed together?

Does God himself require such agreement? or do men? True it is, that if we would prevail in prayer, we must agree together touching what we would ask—for the same reason that we must agree together, in presenting a petition to an earthly monarch. And though it is declared that if any *one* ask, he shall receive—and that we do not have, because we do not ask—yet, for the double-minded man, there is no encouragement, and for the unstable as water, no hope.

We are individualities. God's whole creation is made up of nothing else. However much alike we may be—we are always unlike enough, to be distinguished from all other human beings that ever breathed, and this, not in our bodies only, but in our minds, our affections, and our experience. As individualities, we were created—as individualities, we live—we suffer—we enjoy. As individualities, we die, and are to be judged, here and hereafter; and each for himself, and not one for another.

Would you have this law changed? Would you like to be tried by the opinions, or be answerable for the judgment of another, in the world to come? Before you undertake to ransom a brother, be sure that a ransom has been found for yourself.

How long will you wait? Will the time ever come, think you, when Christians will agree together in everything? And are you likely to live to see it?

As well hope to see mankind judged in the lump—as to find them judging in the lump. Having different

characters, they must have different opinions about every thing capable of dispute.

Beware of letting such considerations prevail with you. Otherwise, you decide the great question—not for yourself—but *against yourself*, and forever: since to wait for all Christians to agree, would be to wait until whatever distinguished them, one from another, had been resolved into the unchangeable unity of God himself.

2. But the Bible itself, as a rule of faith and action, is understood by different inquirers, alike trustworthy, diligent and conscientious, in different senses.

Answer: very true—in some things—though not in every-thing; and almost always, perhaps, in what may prove to be non-essentials hereafter.

And these differences of opinion are among those that are *nearest*—as bodies that are travelling in the same path, and the same plane, if they do not coalesce, are most likely to clash.

3. But the People of God, as they call themselves, contradict their professed belief, by their daily walk and conversation: so that they who are not with them, are tempted to ask, ‘What do ye more than others?’

Granted—and what then? Would that change your accountability? Would it lessen yours, because it aggravated theirs? Would it alter the *facts*—when Christ himself says, to every such questioner—‘What is that to thee? *Follow thou me*’.

Bear in mind, that the Bible was to be always the Bible—whatever might be the progress of the human mind, or the spiritual growth of Man, and however well

adapted to the understandings of the feeblest. Of course, therefore, it must always contain something above, and often unintelligible to, the multitude—nay, beyond the understandings, not only of the great multitude, but of the wisest and greatest of any given age.

But you go further. Professing Christians, you say, cannot believe what they pretend to believe—and they, by the supposition, are the only qualified witnesses—else they would neither eat, nor sleep: there would be no marrying, nor giving in marriage—for who would put in jeopardy the everlasting welfare of a child, if he—or she—could help it? There would be no more household comforts, no more family relationship; and all the business of the world, so far as Believers are concerned, would stop forever; and their whole time would be employed in prayers and tears, in lamentations or self-reproach, or ‘in the groanings that cannot be uttered’.

And this, you believe, or pretend to believe. But who makes the charge? Professors, or non-professors? the experienced, or the inexperienced? Believers, or Unbelievers? Does the Bible say so? Did the Patriarchs, or the Prophets ever so teach? Did Jesus Christ, or any of the Apostles, or any of the Martyrs, among the early Christians?

True: We are to give up all that we have, in a spiritual sense. We are to forsake father and mother, wife and children, houses and lands—but always in a spiritual sense. They are to be no longer idols—‘Thou shalt have no other Gods but me’, says Jehovah.

So too, we are to ‘rejoice evermore’, to ‘be constant in prayer’; ‘to pray without ceasing’, and to give thanks

to the Lord, every-where, and at all times, in whatsoever we do ; and ‘ whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we are to do all to the glory of God’. 1 Cor. x: 31 —1 Thess. v: 16, 17. But all these things, we can do *only* in a spiritual sense. Impossibilities are not required of us.

And then too, let it never be forgotten, that we are solemnly charged to provide for our own. We are to watch over our children ; to train them up in the way they should go; and not ‘ provoke them to wrath.’ I wish therefore, younger women to marry, to bear children, to manage families, is the language of Paul himself :* We are to rule our own household : we are to be masters and servants. Believers, though yoked with unbelievers, are not to give them up, nor put them away : husbands are to love their wives, and wives are to reverence their husbands—Woman being the glory of Man, or rather, as Wakefield renders it, ‘ the glorious *image* of man’, as man is of God : We are to feed the hungry, to clothe the naked, and minister to the brethren that have need.

Therefore, marriage, with all the incidents and relationships of marriage, like seed-time and harvest, were to continue : *therefore*, inequalities of condition were to continue : and *therefore*, Christians are to be ‘ not slothful in business’, though ‘ fervent in spirit’, and ‘ serving the Lord’—for rightly to labor is to worship : they are to be active, diligent and faithful in the discharge of all their duties, both to God and man.

* Wakefield’s Translation.

But however all this may be, you say, it is undeniable that the behavior of professing Christians, instead of corresponding with, absolutely and notoriously contradicts their alleged belief, day after day, and year after year: They show no such troublesome earnestness for the spiritual and everlasting welfare of others, even for that of their own flesh and blood—no such uplifting sense of the worth of souls—no such joy over the sinner that repenteth, as might be reasonably expected of them: and they are not so constantly and clearly distinguished from the men and women about them, who, like Thomas Jefferson himself, in our great manifesto to the Nations, profess nothing but a decent regard for the opinions of the world, even while appealing to Almighty God, as they have undertaken to be at all times, and every-where, by a solemn covenant, renewed month after month, and year after year, to the end of their pilgrimage; and as they could not fail to be, if they truly and steadfastly believed what they profess to believe.

A true Christian, you say, ought to be instantly known, every-where, and at all times, and under all circumstances, however trying: and a professor, who manages to go about among the multitude, without being suspected, *is therefore no Christian.*

The charge is well grounded. It deserves to be well considered: for it involves not only a most alarming truth, but the highest possible compliment to christian character, in its beauty and holiness.

For, what must be the true standard, if the best and wisest of mankind—among Believers—fall so far short

of it, all their lives long, as they certainly do, in the judgment of Unbelievers, or the World?

Not only are the worshippers judged of by their God—but every God is judged of by his worshippers. Where the gods are monkeys, what must the people be? says Voltaire, in speaking of the Egyptians, who worshipped onions, and beetles, and apes: and where the people are treacherous, and cruel, and cowardly, what wonder that their gods are the gods of the pagan or idolater, blood-thirsty, abominable and unclean, like the monsters of the Greek or the Roman, of the Hindoo or the Mexican? Let the followers of the meek and lowly Jesus carry out the parallel—if they dare.

But observe. To expect so much of the professed Believer, is to admit the truth of what is meant to be denied: a purifying and exalting power in faith; a transforming influence, call it by what name you may, in the teachings of the Gospel. Yet more—it is to look for a change of life, which, if not caused by a change of heart, must appear very wonderful to the Unbeliever, if not wholly unaccountable.

But if a parallel to the strange contradiction between professed belief and practice among Believers, might be found, not here and there, but constantly, among men of the world—what then? Would not the worth of this objection be lessened, just in proportion to the uniformity and frequency of its occurrence among Unbelievers?

And if so, let me ask in all seriousness and fairness, if you believe there is now living upon earth a man, woman or child, with the gift of reason, whose behavior

does not sometimes give the lie to habitual profession?

And when this happens, do you always charge upon the individual, either hypocrisy, or self-delusion? Or do you make some allowance — remembering how much you yourself may need — for the infirmity of our nature; and for provocation, hurry, or surprise? a want of preparedness, or self-possession, or the strength of habit?

And if you ever do this for a man, or woman, of the world, why not for a professed Christian? If you are charitable to Unbelievers, why not to Believers? It were but reasonable to expect more charity of you, toward Believers; for, the higher the standard, the more frequent, and the more alarming, must be our deficiencies.

But we may go further — much further. Let us apply your reasoning to a case, where we need have nothing to do with what the parties may profess to believe, or not to believe; because we know, of our own knowledge, that they must believe, and cannot help their belief, whatever they may say to the contrary, even while that belief is contradicted, by almost everything they do or say, while upon earth.

You are amazed — you are overwhelmed with astonishment perhaps, that any reasonable man should think of supposing such a case; and you begin to think I am not serious, or that you may have misunderstood the proposition.

And yet such cases are to be found at every step, among your associates and companions. They have been found every-where, and at all times, from the beginning;

and they will continue to the end of time ; and though you cannot believe it possible, yet you, yourself, are just such a case, and to you, I mean to appeal for the truth of what I am about to say.

The proposition is, that a fixed and rooted belief, not an alleged nor professed belief merely, but a belief so evident, and so unquestionable, as to leave no doubt in the mind of any reasonable creature, may co-exist with habits of daily and hourly contradiction ; of contradiction, so startling and so strange, that we could not believe in such a co-existence, but for the unchangeable history of Man's nature, the uninterrupted experience of countless millions—for countless ages perhaps—and our knowledge of ourselves.

That there may be no possibility of mistake, or evasion, or subterfuge, let us look at some great clear wondrous truth, which nobody, however prone to doubt, would ever think of denying.

But is there any such truth ? Would it be worth while to look for any such truth, since men may be found to deny the shining of the sun at noon-day, upon the authority of Bishop Berkely ?

Let us see.

You profess to believe that life is uncertain, death certain :

That you are not sure of living another day : not sure indeed of being allowed to draw another breath :

You profess to believe that you are liable to be taken away, without warning or notice : that, come when it may, to the great mass of mankind, with here and there an exception, death is very sure to be not only

unwelcome, but unexpected: and that, even to the bereaved and broken-hearted; to the aged, and to the helpless; to the weary and heavy-laden, it is almost always an object of wholesome terror, every-where, and at all times.

Are not all these things true? And are they not as true of others, as of yourself? And are they not, moreover, truths of such a nature, that no man ever thinks of denying them—well knowing that he would not be believed, if he did? And truths of such a character, that we all know, of our own knowledge, that all mankind must believe them, whatever they may pretend to the contrary, just as we, ourselves, believe them?

Yet more; upon the supposition that you are no Atheist—that you believe in some kind of Hereafter—and that you are not to be classed with ‘undevout Astronomers’, you are probably in the habit, upon every suitable occasion, of professing to believe, perhaps for the encouragement of your children, or the comfort of a beloved wife, or husband, that the whole business of life is rightly to prepare for death; for the fast-approaching, *unescapable* doom of the mightiest, as well as the weakest of God’s creatures. Hence the toil, the weariness, the self-denying drudgery, you submit to, year after year, in laborious gathering for those you are to leave behind, whether many or few, strangers or kindred. And all for what?—only that you may be remembered; that you may live again, somehow: for even the Atheist—if there be such a mistake upon earth—would not be wholly forgotten.

OBJECTIONS WEIGHED.

You know that you believe, at least, in the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of life. But suppose you were called upon to prove your belief—this very belief—to some loftier Intelligence, having no knowledge of man's history, and no experience of death, how would you go to work?

Would you hope to satisfy him by reiterated asseverations? This, you know, would be utterly hopeless—if your life did not correspond with your professed belief.

But does it? Or did it, ever? Are you not giving the lie, not only every day, but every hour, to that professed belief? nay more, to what every-body on earth knows—although, by the supposition, that higher Intelligence may not know—to be your real belief, beyond all question, doubt, or cavil?

Would he not disregard all your declarations and professions? Would he not say—being without knowledge, or experience, by the supposition—How is it possible that this man, or this woman, can hope to persuade me? What a farce! counterfeiting so much, and believing so little! Where is that deep and lofty seriousness? that steadfast and serene, though child-like and simple trust, under trial, disappointment and sorrow, bereavement and suffering? Where the patient self-denial? the unwearyed, sleepless watchfulness? and where, in short, are the unmistakeable signs of preparation for death?

How could he believe you?

And if he could not believe you—why should we be discouraged because you, being without our experience, and our knowledge, refuse to believe our declarations,

however constantly repeated, so long as our daily walk and conversation give the lie to them?

What then is the conclusion to which I would arrive?

It is this. People, without knowledge or experience, must believe upon the testimony of others, or not believe at all.

And we, who profess to have experience, aver that there *is* such a thing as a spiritual regeneration.

You reply that we are mistaken—that we do not believe what we profess to believe—*because* our lives contradict our professions.

To which we answer. So do yours. We appeal to your own personal experience; and we say, leaving you to argue the question with yourself, where you cannot be overheard, that your own life not only contradicts your professions—or professed belief—but daily, hourly, and at every breath almost, what we all know that you must and do believe, and cannot help believing.

And therefore, the objection you have raised, though plausible on the face, and formidable enough, unquestioned, being proved worthless, by your own hourly experience, where you could not possibly be mistaken, falls to the ground of itself, and forever.

Is it not so? Is there any flaw in the demonstration? Is not the analogy complete? Is not the behavior of Christians, where it contradicts their alleged belief, entirely of a piece with your behavior, and with that of all mankind, where it contradicts, not profession, but belief; rooted, fixed, unquestioned and unchangeable belief?

You believe in the certainty of death, and the uncertainty of life; that you are not sure of living another day, though you could not, if your life depended on it, furnish any proof that would satisfy another, unless he had a like belief already—founded on a similar experience.

Were you called upon for the proof to-day, not of the facts themselves, that *Life is uncertain, Death certain*, and always nearer than we think; but of your belief in these facts, what would be your answer? Would you dare to appeal to your daily walk and conversation? Or would you not rather appeal to the questioner's knowledge of himself? to the deeper instincts, and more awful mysteries of Man's nature?

Be not deceived. You profess to know yourself. Is there a single act of your life, which would be likely to satisfy another, having no experience of death, and therefore no belief in death, apart from your representations, that you really and truly believe in death?

Occupied on earth as he finds you, day after day, how could he ever be persuaded that you do of a truth believe in that certain, that ever near, and yet nearer doom, alike unavoidable and unchangeable, which men have agreed among themselves to call death? Ask yourself, my dear friend, what would be the nature and amount of proof you would require, to satisfy you that another believed in death, if you had no other knowledge of the dread mystery, than that which he may have communicated to you.

Nevertheless you believe; and are astonished that anybody should ever think of questioning your belief.

In other words, you do believe, and we all know you do, though your daily walk and conversation would be thought wholly unreconcileable with such belief, had we no experience ourselves.

In what particular then, do you differ, with your inconsistencies, from the 'People of God', or from professed Christians, in theirs? Having no experience like theirs, you question the reality of their belief; alleging, that if they did believe, as they pretend, whether honestly or otherwise, you do not undertake to determine, they could neither eat, nor sleep. And yet, you yourself are constantly doing, though in a more aggravating and perplexing way, just what you charge them with—giving the lie, every-where, and at all times, not only to your professed belief; but to your well-known, most undoubted, and unquestionable belief.

Now—between the Believer and the Unbeliever, there is a great gulf. Do you deny this? Do you not see and feel this, in all the striving and turmoil about you? in all the changes, and all the business of the World?

Suppose another talking with you, face to face; another, who had never seen death, nor heard of death; and, having no experience of death, could have no fear of it; and suppose—you will forgive me, I hope, for dwelling a moment here, and slightly changing the illustration—suppose you were to tell him what you know of death—how strange, how terrible, how certain: suppose you were to go a step further, and speak of what may follow death and judgment, according to the best of your knowledge and belief: and then suppose that your life—your daily walk and conversation—were just what

they are now, neither better nor worse, you yourself being the judge—and the witness—giving the lie to your professions—would it be possible for him to believe you? Would his own understanding be sufficient? Would he not require a supernatural illumination?—faith in you, notwithstanding your weakness and wavering—faith in God—faith in what is unsearchable, and faith in every-thing?

And yet you *do* believe, and like others below you, tremble: though he may not, and cannot. His inability, however, does not interfere with you—it neither hinders nor changes your faith: for you know of your own knowledge; you cannot be mistaken.

Another illustration might be of use here—to show the strange inconsistency between belief and practice—clear and fixed belief, which cannot be questioned, with our daily and hourly practice.

All know, and all would acknowledge, if rightly questioned thereto, that our greatest earthly blessings are the commonest, and the blessings most to be desired. That reason, health, speech, sight and hearing, with the power of becoming better and wiser, like air and water, though not often counted among our blessings, even while they are acknowledged among the necessities of our being—just as if all had them, and all God's creatures had a right to them, by purchase, birth, or inheritance—are nevertheless our greatest blessings: blessings without which, life itself would not be worth having.

Of course, therefore, believing this, he who, with his eyes open, barters any one of these—or endangers it—

for any of the pleasures of transgression, must be beside himself, or besotted, or under some strange delusion. So we should suppose—and so we should all reason, had we not our own personal experience, to prove that our *belief*, no matter how fixed or certain, does not, under all circumstances, determine our behavior; though it may have, and in the long run, must have, its influence.

To say, therefore, that a man does not believe what he pretends to believe, merely because that alleged belief is clearly inconsistent with his behavior—is, to say the least of it, with all our experience of ourselves, very weak reasoning.

But, after all, how are you to persuade, or help another, so long as he is without experience? Must it not be God's work? And if so, is it not clear, even to your understanding, as a man of the world, or as a woman of the world, that you can never be made to believe in that, of which you yourself are wholly without experience or knowledge, unless you believe upon evidence that *may* be questioned: upon evidence therefore, which calls for *faith*, and pre-supposes truth in Man; or by the operation of some higher influence, which overmasters the understanding, and silences forever all presumptuous questioning?

In other words: must he not undergo a change of character, before he can believe you?—and must not you undergo a change of heart, or character, before you can believe the professing Christian? Must you not have some sort of knowledge, and some sort of experience, which you are without?

And what then? Because you do not believe, and

cannot believe now, is that any good reason why you never should believe? or why you should not try to believe, by putting yourself in the way of obtaining experience for yourself? What say you?

And now let us come to the point. If you do not decide this question for yourself—God will decide it for you. This, you believe—do you not? Have you much time to lose then? Suppose he should decide it against you to day, where will you be tomorrow? Life is uncertain, you say—death certain. Are you quite sure that you believe this? that you really understand it?

You are one of the great multitude perhaps, who cannot make up their minds; or who, being very busy, or very prosperous, are obliged to suspend their decision. But will God suspend his! Travellers along what they acknowledge to be a dangerous path—unable to make up their minds, to look about them, or to inquire the way! and trying to persuade themselves, that inasmuch as they have not been able to come to a decision, they have therefore nothing to fear!

But in point of fact, are you not deceiving and betraying yourself, most shamefully? Every time the question springs up in your heart, every time you are troubled in spirit, and ‘coming events cast their shadows before’, and you fail to decide one way, do you not in fact decide the other way? God will have no neutrals. We must all be for him, or against him. Whatever else you may believe, or not believe, this—if there be a God—you cannot help believing.

Perhaps, too, you cannot understand why some people are so much in earnest, while the great body of profess-

ing Christians are sleeping on their posts. Can it be, you say, that while thousands are untroubled, and only here and there one troubled, that the many are wrong, and the few right?

Hear what the Saviour himself says to lukewarm professors, in reply to this very objection, as if anticipating your thought, by nearly two thousand years.

To the Church of Laodicea, he says, Rev. 3: 15, 'Would thou wert either cold or hot!'

And what is this but to say, that the worst possible condition is that of lukewarmness?

For the lukewarm are the self-satisfied — the untroubled — whether in the church, or out: and they it is, who mislead others, and betray them to death.

Better be cold — better the icy coldness of heart, which makes itself felt, and alarms the spirit of man to seek relief. By the constitution of our whole nature, we swing from one extreme to the other, and more is to be hoped from that brother, or sister, who has reached the utmost degree of coldness, than from those who have stopped half-way, entirely satisfied with themselves, and furnishing all about them with an excuse for doing no more, and going no further.

But be of good cheer, brother! for if there be life, as we all know there is, in the very dust of the pyramids, no matter how deeply buried, nor how long, in the darkness of forgotten empires, which comes forth anew with rejoicing beauty and greenness, whenever the sunshine and the dew fall upon it, or the warm breath of God's upper sky passes over, surely we may hope for a full harvest from the living soil of human hearts, always

full of seed, after the great Husbandman hath once passed over them, whatever may be the dreariness of their desolation, if God but breathe upon them at last. But when the shower comes, wo to all, whether professors or non-professors, who cover up their hearts, or shelter themselves under pretence of preparation—they might as well carry umbrellas. If the heart be unvisited, or unrefreshed, there is no hope; and if you are betrayed by such professors, however terrible it may be for you, it will be much worse for them. Of that you may be assured.

But still, you cannot make up your mind. Are you a simpleton? Or do you want courage—manhood—or womanhood, to face the question? hoping to be overlooked or forgotten at last, when God's angel encampeth around about them that fear him, and the Destroyer goes forth, commissioned from on high, to waste the heritage of Earth? Like the desert-bird, you shut your eyes, and believe there is no danger, because you do not see it; and that after all, there may be no such thing as death and judgment, and no Hereafter worth mentioning—*perhaps*.

But suppose you should be mistaken, as the ostriches are sometimes—what then?

And others are like you. There may be ten thousand times ten thousand upon the earth, at this moment, as there always have been, to keep you in countenance.

But—bear with me a moment longer, I pray you—*but*—although many of these, and perhaps most of them, through unexpected help from above, may be led to open their eyes, far enough at least to see the darkness about them, before it is too late, forever—there are some, and

this too, you must believe, unless you are now what I myself was but the other day, a conscientious, untrembling Universalist—*some* who never will do this.

And how do you know that you yourself are not among that number? What assurances have *you* against sudden death? If unprepared, what reason have *you* for believing otherwise? What hope?

But if, instead of thousands, or tens of thousands, there should be only one—one only of all God's creation; and if that one bore a mark upon his forehead—not the mark that was put upon the forehead of the first man-slayer that he might live—nor that which burns forever upon the forehead of Lucifer, that he may bear rule for a time; nor that which, according to universal tradition, betrays the wanderer that was doomed to tarry here, until the return of the patient Sufferer he smote in passing—but the seal of death, of unchangeable and everlasting death, like that which may be supposed to distinguish, from all his towering compeers, that 'Son of perdition', who betrayed, not his friend only—not his Lord and master—but himself; and for thirty pieces of silver; and then, as if that were not enough, went away and hanged himself, to bind the bargain: and if he that bore that seal of death—wholly unconscious of it himself, perhaps, while others around him were standing aghast with horror, should happen to cross your path, in the busiest thoroughfare of life, or be found sitting by your side at supper, or near you at some public meeting, or in the House of God, what would be your feelings? Would you not shrink from all companionship? Would you not shrivel at his

approach? Would not his dearest earthly friends fly shrieking to the solitude of their chambers; or to the wilderness and the sea-shore, and cry to God for mercy, and for help, if he followed them?

But hear me! How know you that the mark is not burning now—*now*, at this moment, upon your own forehead! that seal of death—of unchangeable and everlasting death? Visible not to others, not to your neighbors, or friends, not even to your beloved ones, or yourself; but known to be there, nevertheless, by them that have followed you, it may be, from your youth up, with locked hands and beseeching eyes—the loved and the lost.

With some of earth's children it must be so—some will perish unforgiven—as you have acknowledged, and all would acknowledge, if their eyes were opened. And why may it not be so with you! What have you done heretofore—what are you now doing—to justify the unreasonable hope, you sometimes express, that you may be overlooked or forgotten; or that God may be pleased to except you from the operation of his fixed, unchangeable law—for such, after all, is the ground of your only hope, translated into language.

By sudden death, or otherwise, many will perish forever. God himself hath said it—and the ministering angel that encamps round about your house, may see the signet of death, or madness, burning at this moment upon your forehead, or mine, although we may not feel it, nor others among our familiar friends behold it.

And because we do not feel it, nor believe it, will that change the fact? If you thrust your head into

the lion's mouth, will he not be likely to tear you ? If you dip your hands into molten iron, will it not be likely to scorch you, whatever you may believe, or pretend to believe, to the contrary ? The lion may have been trained by Van Amburgh himself: your hands may have been washed, over and over again, with warranted chemical preparations, and you may have lost no time in the experiment; still, if you have a moderate share of common-sense and common honesty, you must acknowledge that your escape—if you do escape, was not owing to your belief; but to something else. And if you should cast yourself headlong into the sea, with a suit of armor to weigh you down; or fill your lungs with carbonic acid gas, would your belief be likely to buoy you up, or empty your lungs ?

And so too, if you cast yourself down headlong from that temple, where God himself, and not the Adversary of souls, hath placed you, may you not be dashed to pieces—whatever theory you have taken up?—unless indeed He should do for you what his own beloved Son durst not tempt his Father to do for him—and ‘give his angels charge of you?’

But, after all, what difference can it make, whether the mark be upon your forehead, or not? and whether visible or not, either to yourself or others, if He, who sees the end from the beginning, sees it there ?

None to yourself, certainly; for you have betrayed yourself without shame, you have doomed yourself, without remorse or pity; and for much less than the thirty pieces of silver, or the mess of pottage, for which Esau and Judas bartered away, the one his birth-right, and the other

his everlasting soul. To your wife, or children, to your husband, or father, or mother, or friend, or neighbor, it might be a help and a warning: for the benighted and the lost among the wanderers of earth, might be able to find their way to their Father, by the destroying brightness, that was slowly consuming you, and all your hopes, forever.

Perhaps you may rely upon the testimony of those who, after professing to believe, continued for a season, and then fell away: If so—are you not wronging yourself? Are the few to prevail over the many? Are backsliders and traitors—or self-deceivers, at the best—worthier of belief than sober-minded consistent professors? Look about you. Judge of Christianity, not by the faithless and the few—but by the faithful, whether few or many. Do this for your own sake—not for mine—or you dishonor yourself, and cheat your own highest hopes.

Think of all this, I beseech you, and be prepared. You may not have an hour to lose. You may be just on the point of throwing yourself headlong into a dark, fathomless abyss, where the weight you carry must sink you lower and lower, with every desperate struggle, and every gasping cry: for the night cometh but once, and the day dawneth but once, to the children of Men. As the Lord liveth, we shall find it so at last, when our sun has gone down forever.

PRAYER.

“Behold he prayeth!”

WHAT Sin is, we shall never know, till we, ourselves, are sinless. And when will that be?

Well do we know, that the more familiar we are with any form of transgression, the less hateful it appears: while, on the contrary, the less we know, and see, and hear, of any particular sin, the more astonishing it seems, not only that we ourselves, but that any-body should ever be guilty of it.

Liars and cheats glory in not being thieves: thieves, in not being robbers—house-breakers, highwaymen, forgers and ravishers, wonder at murderers, and pirates. And all together cry out with horror, at infanticide, parricide, or incest—save where infanticide, as in the East, is common; parricide, as among certain of our North-American tribes, by starvation, a well-established usage; and incest, as in the first peopling of the world, or in Persia, a common thing. Murderers by profession—duellists and soldiers—get so familiar with Manslaughter, as to *believe* the downright killing of a brother to be less criminal than theft, or falsehood, or a breach of promise at the gaming-table; and, when charged with

falsehood, that forbearing to shoot the accuser, is no better than sheer cowardice.

And why? Because, being familiar with one form of transgression, and but little acquainted with the other, the first appears trivial, the last, unforgivable and shameless.

If we, like the Angels above, were sinless, how should we feel, how speak, of the first transgression we ever heard of? Would there be any such thing as a little sin? Would any, the smallest sin, be trivial? Ask the Angels themselves. The simplest act of disobedience, or forgetfulness, or unthankfulness, would be justly aggravated, by the consideration, that it was the breach of a small duty; in other words, the failure to do what was easy to do.

Hence, the necessity of prayer. Capable of sinning, we require to be guarded against all temptation; to be continually strengthened from above.

And hence, the just and beautiful inference, that the better we are, and the better we become, the more hateful, and strange, and affronting, to our sense of right, will every kind of transgression appear.

Let three different persons be employed to make three different maps of the world: for three different purposes. Let one be required to furnish a map, showing by an appropriate color, where Protestantism prevails throughout the whole earth, or in other words where the Bible is free as the air we breathe: Let another be called to represent on another map of the whole earth, and by the same color, the highest condition of political freedom —or the largest liberty of the people; and another, to

show by the same color on a third map, the highest condition of Woman throughout the whole earth ; in other words, where she is best treated, and has most influence. Then lay these three maps before you ; and they will be found, not only interchangeable, but identical.

Are not these results therefore in some way, and so far as we may judge by experience, inseparably connected ? And although others pray—the Roman Catholic and the Mohammedan, the Hindoo and the Idolater—still they do not pray as the Protestants do ; and therefore, may it not be regarded as a fair and proper inference, that prayer, as employed by protestants, hath much to do with the liberty of Man, and the hope of Woman ; and therefore, with the household virtues, the education of children, and the progress of knowledge ?

But why pray ? God knows better than we what we need : he is readier to give, than we, to ask : and he is unchangeable.

Granted : But first. We are commanded to pray—distinctly and clearly—and if we were unable to find a reason for prayer, still it would be our duty to pray.

Nevertheless there are reasons, and God has revealed them : 1st. By showing that men are strengthened and made worthier, even while their prayers do not seem to be answered : as, where the Saviour prayed all night long, and ‘sweated as it were great drops of blood’—and yet, to the understanding of Man, his prayer was not answered—the cup did not pass from him: and 2dly. By putting on record answers to prayer, and blessings without number, to encourage us.

Yet more. He has enabled us, by the gift of reason, to see—if we will but turn our eyes inwardly upon our own hearts—one of the purposes of prayer. For example. Here is a father, having within his reach, and laid up in store, all that his children need, in sickness or in health, under all circumstances, at all times: and he knows what they need, much better than they do; and is always readier to give, than they are to ask: and yet—whenever they desire anything out of the common way, he will be inquired of—he will be sought—he will know the reasons which influence the party: in other words, he wants evidence that the child himself understands the subject, and feels the need. Is this unreasonable, for an earthly father? On the contrary, is it not just what we all do—and not only to our children, but to our friends—neighbors—and others? Have we not a pleasure in stopping the mouth of a petitioner—in answering, before he has finished the prayer—even though we know beforehand what he wants—or needs—and is about to ask for? And so with acknowledgments—and so with gifts—to our Father, and to others.

That God is unchangeable, is one among many reasons why we should pray. Having commanded us to pray, under heavy penalties—having encouraged us to pray, under rich promises—we *must* pray: because, being unchangeable, that which he threatens, or promises, that will he do. And, though they may not change his ultimate purpose from the first—still, as we never can know what such ultimate purpose was, nor what are the conditions beyond our reach, and how far above our understanding, how foolish not to obey! Do not men pray to

earthly sovereigns—though reputed unchangeable, and unrelenting ?

But God is every-where.

True ; and so is the sunshine—and so is the hidden warmth of the sun : we breathe a luminous atmosphere. But he who desires to appropriate a larger portion of that brightness and warmth, for any special purpose—must use a burning-glass. Prayer is the Christian's burning-glass, whereby the wandering rays are brought together. Employ it ever so much, and instead of diminishing the supply to others—instead of impoverishing others—we encourage them to follow in our footsteps, and to do the same thing: for the supply is inexhaustible. There is a fountain of light—a whole neighborhood may bring lamps and torches to the flame, and the supply will not be diminished—the lamp lighted at my lamp, takes nothing from my light—but propagates by touch, till the whole world is lighted up. Such is prayer—a burning-glass to the few that hold fast by it—a kindling torch to the many, to be passed from hand to hand, like the bale-fire of the Scotch, when they would rouse the people by clans.

And why are not prayers always answered ? What a question ! Are the prayers of children always answered, by the most loving father ? Are they not often so answered, that the answer does not appear ? Are not refusals, blessings ? And again, if we could always have what we wanted for the asking, we should always do nothing but ask, and be satisfied with asking ; and substitute our understanding for God's ; and, in our caprice, or whim, like little children, be forever in danger

from our toys and play-things, or from the gratification of our wishes.

But the prayers of the wicked are an abomination, saith the Bible; and, as we are all wicked, therefore all prayer is an abomination.

To which I answer, 1st. That no such Bible can be found. The passage stands thus:

‘He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law; even *his prayer shall be an abomination.*’ Proverbs, xxviii: 9.

‘The way of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.’ Ib. xv: 9.

And again ‘The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord.’ Ib. xv: 26.

2d. But since God commands prayer, encourages prayer, and answers prayer, *though* all men are wicked, the passage cannot mean what you and others, while arguing against prayer, have supposed. To pray, even for the wickedest, even for the Chief of sinners, must be something better than not to pray. The cry for mercy heard from a drunken sailor at midnight, tumbling headlong into a stormy sea: that unearthly wailing shriek of Napoleon, as the unquenchable spirit burst away from the tabernacle of flesh, tearing a passage for itself, as through a beleaguered host; like the outstretched arms, the awful countenance, and the lifted body of the wretched man that was carried over the Falls of Niagara the other day, as if standing up: all these are but so many different kinds of prayer, which God hears every moment, in the pulsations of the Universe.

Whatever we may think of such prayer, while in safety, or untroubled in health, it is all that the best may have time for; and our Heavenly Father knows how to make allowances. If it were not so, He would have told us: and how otherwise could the poor wanderer be saved, either at sea, or on shore, with no church, no closet, no companionship, no help, no sympathy, no time for meditation, and no time for prayer? Like the fishermen of Galilee, the sailor must be converted without delay, perhaps without prayer, and at once.

Look at the Centurion. He was not a disciple—not even a Believer, till questioned; but he felt his unworthiness. ‘Lord! I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof’—and inasmuch as love, deep and earnest love always fills us with a sense of our unworthiness, and leads us to exalt the beloved object, by undervaluing ourselves, that love was counted to him for righteousness, even while he pleaded for another—and in all human probability, an Unbeliever, like himself; or if a Believer, a Believer, without knowing it.

Nor must we overlook the parable of the unjust Judge, who was worried into hearing the Widow’s plaint, by sheer importunity; nor the friend, who granted the prayer of another, not because he was a friend—but because he persevered, and would give him no peace; nor the case of that father pleading for a beloved son, whom the evil spirit oftentimes tore: and cast into the fire and into the water; nor that most encouraging and beautiful suggestion of the Saviour touching earthly fathers: for what earthly father, if his son asked for an egg, would give him a scorpion?—or if he asked for a

fish, would give him a serpent? or if he asked for bread, would give him a stone? How much more shall your Heavenly Father, who feeds the young lions, and clothes the lily of the field, know how to give good gifts to his children!—with or without prayer?—No, God forbid!—but *with* prayer, and acknowledgment, and thanksgiving.

Why do the disciples never teach by parables? May it not be that we should infer too much? Or might we not be afraid of doing so? for parables, like prophecies, are not always clear; and for that reason may sometimes require to be interpreted by their Author. When we have a parable therefore, without interpretation, urging us to bold and importunate prayer, we may be sure that the obvious meaning is the real meaning.

Well then, we must pray—and so must you—and so must all men, every-where, and sooner or later, in one way or another: with outeries and lamentations, or shrieks and wailings, or in the language of a broken heart and a contrite spirit, with ‘groanings that cannot be uttered.’

We must understand our wants, to feel them: and we must feel them, before we can pray. We cannot pray, and we know it, and God knows it, for anything we do not really desire; but if we desire fervently and passionately, though we never put that desire into language, we pray. Think of this! If all our earnest wishes, and strong desires, and importunate yearnings, are indeed prayers—what would become of the best of us, but for God’s infinite compassion? How affronting, and how awful, to the majesty of God! No wonder that *such*

prayers—the prayers of the Ambitious, of the Adulterous, of the Man-stealer, and the Destroyer, and the Wicked—are an abomination! In this sense, they are so.

Yet more. We must pray with singleness of heart—with no secret purpose, at war with our pretended purpose—and with simplicity—or how can we hope to prevail, or even to be heard, whether in our closets, or in the great congregation?

We must ‘agree together, touching what we would ask’ in his name. We must be of one mind—having one wish, and one hope; unwavering and steadfast: for God will not listen to the double-minded man. ‘Unstable as water, he cannot excel.’ And what earthly monarch would listen to a multitude, or even to the cries of two or three, who were not agreed together, touching what they would ask? We must be ‘constant in prayer’—Some people appear to believe, that importunity may be troublesome—and that they, who do importune the Being, that knows all our wants, are intended to be reproved by the passage, ‘They think to be heard for their much speaking.’ It is not much speaking—but rather frequent speaking, or frequent thinking—that God requires. The poor innocent, who, in a time of great danger and fright, began his prayer thus—‘O Lord! thou knowest I trouble thee but seldom’, is a just representative of this class, though Believers.

And consider the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. Both were sinners: both were blinded by transgression; but one *felt* his blindness, and the other did not; and therefore, *he* prayed, as God will have us to pray, and went down justified accordingly.

‘Son of David! have mercy on me!’ was the cry of the poor, helpless, blind man, sitting by the way-side, when he heard the trampling multitude go by; for he could not follow Jesus, even afar off, nor find him, without help, as they did: nor would he be silenced, even by the disciples; but only cried the more, when they rebuked him, ‘Son of David! have mercy on me!’

What wonder the Saviour turned back to him, and said, ‘What wouldest thou have?’

‘O Lord, that I may receive my sight!’

Now, if he had not understood, and felt his blindness, would he have done this? Would not Jesus of Nazareth have gone by unheeded? or uncalled for? Believe me, friend—our eyes must be partially opened, before we can see the darkness about us.

But—‘I am thine, and thou art mine,’ says the Saviour. Then why pray at all, but to ourselves? ‘Ye are in me as I am in the Father,’ Does it follow then, that because we are his, and he ours; or because we are in him, as he is in the Father, even while he himself, prayed to the Father, and all night long! that we are not to pray at all, nor to either; or that there is no sense in which we are not his, nor he ours? or not *in* him, nor he *in* the Father? Surely, if we are anything less than Jehovah, our being in him, or in the Saviour himself, cannot make prayer worthless, or unnecessary—if our Blessed Master found it becoming and proper; nay, absolutely needful.

Who that has never been afflicted, nor troubled, nor admonished of God, can know anything of the comforts and consolations of prayer? Can they whose health

has never failed them, understand its preciousness ? Our last days might be always our best days, did we know how to avail ourselves wisely, and in proportion to our need, of the blessed privilege of prayer. The longer we live, the wiser we are, almost in spite of ourselves : for though we forget much, we remember more, of all that we have experienced, up to the failure of memory and reason. The fewer days we have left, the more precious they ought to be ; and every hour to him, who is soonest to see his Fathers's face, ought to be as a life-time, whatever may be his age. Is it not so with all our gifts, and blessings and comforts ? The fewer we have, the more we prize them. Like the books of the Sybil, as their numbers diminish, their worth is augmented. It is even so with character. The less we have, the more jealous we are, of encroachment and abbreviation.

To be understood—nay, to be felt, and acknowledged, our blessings must be withdrawn, or endangered, or threatened. We feel only the cords that are pulled at, or snapped. When they are untwisted, we continue as we were, untroubled, unawakened.

Yonder stands a pale sickly woman, basking and shivering in the sunshine. Yet she may enjoy more than you and others, who have never known the sickness of the heart, from ‘ hope deferred’, in a whole life-time. Her very step is a prayer. The deep clear eyes, and that mouth so full of thankfulness, and the gently clasped hands underneath her gray cloak—what are these but so many visible prayers ?

Are not our best Christians always the most afflicted ? Are they ever the most abundantly prospered ? Do not the disappointed, and the bereaved, the tried and sorrowing learn at last, like Paul, to 'glory in their tribulations' ? Compare the behavior of one who has been well for fifty years, and is then afflicted for a single day ; with that of another who has been afflicted for fifty years, and is then relieved for a single day. With one, the sufferings of a whole life are overbalanced by the joy of a day, and a correspondent thankfulness will manifest itself ; while with the other, perhaps, the enjoyments of a long life, are outweighed by the sufferings of a day.

Very thankful should we be for all such mercies : and very thankful we may be, that we have no more to be thankful for—without displeasing our Heavenly Father, if we go to him with prayer ; for he 'knoweth our frames that they are but dust, and he pitieh our infirmities.'

Well may it be said, that 'His mercy endureth forever.' If it did not, where should we be now ?—and where hereafter ?

Bear in mind, O Brother ! I beseech thee ! that of him, who is *forgiven* much, much will be required—much love—much obedience—and much labor.

But you are not altogether convinced. You cannot pray till you are invited to pray. It is God's business to call on you first. Would you ask this of any earthly Monarch ? You are ready to return his call, perhaps ; for this, in plain English, is the answer of a multitude.

They cannot bring themselves to make the first advances, even to their Everlasting Father. But the Saviour has not waited for this. Lo! he stands at the door, knocking—and his golden locks are drenched with the night-dews. Wilt thou leave him there? Wilt thou not open to him?—‘Behold he prayeth! ’

UNIVERSALISM.

HAVING myself been a conscientious Universalist, for many years, I am led to look with sorrow and pity upon all those, who, misled perhaps, much in the way that I was, have never been persuaded to reconsider the subject, nor to regard it as at all an open question, before it shall be too late forever.

A thoughtful, conscientious, devout Believer in the ultimate Salvation, or Restoration, of all God's reasonable creatures, whether human or angelic, is much to be pitied ; and the more perhaps, that, if all men are to be finally restored, it were hard to find a reason why Lucifer himself, the Son of the morning, with all his embattled legions, may not be enthroned anew amid the hierarchy of Heaven.

But with all my pity for them, I do not well see how they are to be helped, so long as they are satisfied with their faith, and wholly dependent upon the sincerity of their belief, to shield them from the consequences, if they should prove to be mistaken at last : for say what we may of honest belief, it is probable—not to say certain, that a just God will not modify any law that he may have established for the government of the Universe, merely to accomodate our *unbelief*.

Believe what we may of fire and water—the properties of both may continue unchanged, forever and ever, notwithstanding our belief.

We may fashion, or acknowledge, ‘Gods many and Lords many,’ and build temples to them, and burn incense to them, in the secret chambers of our heart; but, however honest we may be in such worship—having within our reach the sources of a better knowledge—He who says ‘Thou shalt have no other Gods but me’, will not be likely to hold us guiltless, or to change his character, for our accommodation—will he?

This then is the fixed result. We must believe at our peril—and what is more, we must believe rightly, at our peril.

Here lay my danger for many years: and for that reason, I propose to invite such of my late Brethren, as are anxious to know the truth, and to follow it, whithersoever it may lead them, to bear with me for a few minutes, while I endeavor to arrange, for their consideration, the views that have led me to a change of faith.

And here let me say that I never did quite like—nor do I now—the way they are treated by Christians of a different faith. I hold that they are to be reasoned with—not laughed at—nor wondered at—nor misrepresented; for multitudes are honest, and their lives blameless.

When the late Dr. Payson left a pew, because a Universalist preacher was about entering it—he took upon himself to decide a question forever, which God has reserved for himself, to be decided at the judgment day: in other words, that the blood of souls he saw upon the skirts of a fellow-man was enough to set him apart from

all Christian sympathy, even in the House of their common Father. For this, I am told he was afterwards sorry—and I believe it: for otherwise, he must have misunderstood the teaching of the Great Master, who shrank not from fellowship with the chief of sinners, and subjected himself to the charge of being a wine-bibber and a glutton—and possessed by a devil—that he might preach the living truth to them, who would hear it in no other way, and upon no other terms.

Nor do I better like the way they are spoken of, or otherwise openly dealt with, by conscientious men of a different faith: for we may be assured that if they will not bear to be reasoned with, like ourselves, they are all the more entitled to Christian courtesy and forbearance; and we greatly mistake our mission, if we step aside to sneer at, or revile them.

Two examples of what I regard as blameworthy and mischievous, if not unchristian dealing with them, are now before me.

The first is from the New York *Observer*, and appears better calculated to exasperate, than to persuade; to provoke, than to conciliate; and however well meant, may be so answered, as to turn the tables upon the joker, and in that way do a mischief to what I receive as the truth of God.

It is to be found in a biographical sketch of Father Haynes, that extraordinary man, who is called by the ‘Ambassador’ of New York, most unhappily for itself, ‘a poor negro’. Instead of saying, as the magnanimous do—‘Great let me call him, for he conquered me’; for, to degrade our adversary, is to dishonor ourselves, and

provoke others to side with him: they sneer at, and seek to belittle him. Yet father Haynes appears to have been quite a formidable foe, and to have had, with all his playfulness and pleasantry, a scorching earnestness, not always to be found in the summer-lightning that plays about our path, after a warm day, as if it could not be otherwise than harmless. He delighted in a sort of gladiatorial controversy, where the battle-axe and the mace, the glittering spear and the winged arrow, might all be employed to advantage; and where, like Dr. Johnson, ‘if the pistol missed fire, he knocked you down with the butt end of it’, and the paragraph below, which I give at length for its temper, grew out of a passage at arms with the great champion of the Universalist Faith, Hosea Ballou, a man I have heard in my youth, and very much loved to hear.

‘It is true, that Mr. Haynes’s perennial vein of wit was in his side-arms, which never became rusty’—what strange confusion of metaphor by the way!—‘And he knew well when to unsheathe. And on no occasion was he so likely to do it, as when he met a man professing to preach the old serpent, “*ye shall not surely die.*” Of this, scores of anecdotes, besides those noticed in his biography, might be given, if the following is a fair sample.

‘While he resided in Manchester, the Universalists got up a synagogue, and had occasional preaching at the foot of the hill, a little out of the village. One of their leading men after receiving repeated cuts, which he had himself provoked, said,

‘Well, Mr. Haynes, *you* are a man of learning, and I

can't pretend to cope with you ; but in a few weeks, one of our most able ministers is to be here, and I shall bring him up to talk with you.' Mr. H. replied, 'Well, well, bring him along ; I shall be glad to see him.' Not long after, the promised champion and his companion were seen ascending the hill, and meeting another Universalist, informed him whither they were going. He advised them to turn back, assigning as a reason, 'he is an old fox.' But they proceeded, and Mr. Haynes, being called out of his study, was introduced by his neighbor to the stranger as 'our preacher whom I promised to bring to your house.' Taking him by the hand in his usual familiar manner, Mr. H. said, 'How-d'y-e-do ? How-d'y-e-do ? O ! you are the man who preaches that men may lie, and swear, and steal, and get drunk, and commit adultery, and murder, and yet escape hell, and get to heaven after all—ain't you ?' 'No,' said the preacher, very indignantly, 'I preach no such thing.' 'Well,' said Father Haynes, with the most patronizing air, '*you believe so ; don't you ?*' A few *hems* and *haws* closed the interview, and the visitors withdrew, fully satisfied to let 'the old fox' rest unmolested in his own burrow, if he would only let them alone.'

Now suppose that Universalist preacher, having his wits about him, instead of answering '*No*', had answered '*Yes*', in all truth and seriousness—'*yes, to be sure I do—don't you?*' How would Father Haynes have escaped? Which way would he have looked ? for he must have answered *yes*, or given the lie to all preaching ; and made the gospel of none effect !

And supposing father Haynes had gone further and replied 'very indignantly'—'no! *I preach no such thing*'; and the Universalist preacher had gone a step further, by saying 'well'—with the most patronizing air—'*You believe so, don't you?*' Would Father Haynes have dared to answer *No*? On the contrary, would he not have been obliged to answer both questions in the affirmative; or look very foolish?

Or suppose that, to the very dangerous inquiry of the orthodox preacher, 'O, you are the man who preaches, that men may lie, and swear, and steal, and get drunk, and commit adultery, and murder, and yet escape hell, and get to Heaven after all—ain't you?' he had answered somewhat after the following fashion. 'Most certainly I do: for I preach the gospel as I understand it; and so must you believe—do you not? Else what hope can there be for a sinner? Was it not the preaching of Christ himself?

'And has it not been the preaching of all the prophets and all the priesthood, of all the martyrs and apostles, from that day to this?' What a pitiful figure, father Haynes must have cut, instead of his poor, bewildered, chap-fallen brother. So much for sarcasm.

It never convinces, never persuades, however it may wither, scorch, or exasperate; and if we sincerely desire a change of belief in our brethren, we must approach them in a different way; for if we are right, they are in the greatest possible danger, and for want of a proper warning, in a proper spirit, may be lost forever. Would you try to provoke a man sleeping on the verge of a precipice; or about to be swallowed up alive—or so

warn a fellow creature, just within the ripple of Niagara, that he should feel affronted at your interference, and be thereby hindered from seeing his danger, till it was too late for escape ?

And so with all reasoning, though intended for people of your own faith. Be thoroughly satisfied with it yourself, before you presume to lay it before the mind of another, even though he may think as you do : and be very sure that it cannot be answered by your adversary, before you open your batteries upon people of a different faith.

For example. I find in the Christian Mirror of to-day, the following communication, which I give at length, because of my reverence for the aged and faithful editor, and in the hope that 'M,' the writer of the article may be led to reconsider the argument, which he thought so well of, though it did not 'originate with himself.'

'Thou shalt find it after many days.' In 1838, at a holy convocation, our State Conference, among the many who greeted me by name, was an aged gentleman whose name I did not recollect. He pronounced 'Knight.' Instantly I recollected him. 'Do you remember brother, M,' said he, 'to have preached a lecture about fifteen years ago at the house of Capt. W. on the road from W——d to N—— Village?' 'I did once preach there,' was my reply.

'I was there,' said he, 'having then recently returned from Boston, where I had read Balfour's writings, and thought myself a confirmed Universalist. But you used an argument in your lecture, which "knocked out my

underpinning ;" and I could no longer build on that ground.' I inquired what was the argument ? ' It was this', was his reply. ' If there be no unhappiness in the eternal world, then God did the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomrorah *the greatest possible kindness* ; for, he took them instantaneously away from our wretched and sinful world to heaven.' I had used that argument (not original with myself) though I had clothed it in my own language. And when I met this my friend, as before stated, fifteen years had passed away. He had been hopefully converted to the Saviour—had received a public education, been licensed, ordained—honorably and usefully employed in the gospel ministry. The same good man who died in Fisherville, N. H. less than three years since. And I know not how many souls may have been born into the kingdom of God through his instrumentality—nor what will be the final result of his influence on the everlasting interests of many immortals, who would otherwise have been lost—all which may be safely admitted.

But, continues the writer, ' Such facts may well encourage the friends of Christ and of souls, in evangelical efforts to bring sinners to him ; and in prayer for his blessing upon their efforts ; even though for years they may see no good resulting. Christians may hope to witness happy results, even in this life ; but especially in the life to come. Yes, "after many days," when *years* and *months* and *days* have ended—when "the books shall be opened"—when instrumentalities shall be seen in all their tendencies—when the Holy Spirit's effectual workings, with all Heaven-appointed means,

shall be developed—when *cause* and *effect* shall be acknowledged by all concerned, as altogether under Christ's hand, then shall those who, in faith, cast their bread upon the waters, “find it after many days.”

Now, certainly, if this very weak reasoning satisfied the wandering brother, he must have been easily satisfied; and perhaps, being more than half convinced, wanted only a plausible excuse for coming over. That God chooses the weak things of this world to confound the mighty, and the foolish to confound the wise, we all know to be true—we see it every day—and a stronger case I have not met with for a long while—but that such instruments are to be multiplied, or that such reasoning is the better, or safer, or ever worth repeating, I very much question.

We but furnish encouragement for our adversaries, when we mistake shining straws for glittering spears; bulrushes, interwoven with cobwebs, for bulwarks, or intrenchments.

Let us apply the very same reasoning to ourselves, and to our neighbors of the orthodox faith, and see where it will land us.

Why do we pray for them, and why do they pray for themselves, when drawing near the end of their pilgrimage, that they may be lifted up, and healed, and strengthened for the business of life? Why not pray, fervently and constantly, that they may die, and not be restored? and the dearer they are to us, but all the more earnestly?

Why did Lazarus come forth? Why was he recalled to life, by the friend that loved him? Why do we weep

over children? thereby forbidding them to go to Jesus—and so far as we have power—hindering them. If there be happiness hereafter, as we profess to believe: and if the world be what we say it is; then, after we have made our peace with God, the sooner we die, the better.

With every-thing to lose, and nothing to gain, why stay here? It would be the '*greatest possible kindness*,' for God to hurry us away, as he did the dwellers of Gomorrah; there being, for *us*, 'no unhappiness in the eternal world'; and nothing here but danger, and snares and pitfalls?

Furthermore: Life is a blessing—even to the wretched. Whatever people may choose to say, or pretend to believe—Life, here, as a gift of God, is always a blessing; though it may be better for some of us, hereafter, that we had never been born. To such, therefore, the future being taken into the account along with the present, life may not, on the whole, be a blessing: though, while here, the comforts and pleasures of life, in every case, being so much greater than the pains and sorrows, which, after all, are the exceptions, life itself may be justly regarded as always a blessing.

Capital punishment is founded upon the supposition, that even to those who have nothing to live for, death is a terror; however true it may be, that the more unworthy they are to live, the less fitted they are to die. The fewer our blessings, the more precious—and the more thankful we are. Our very wickedness, and evil reputation, but make us cling the more desperately to life. The last penny of the famished beggar, may be

worth more to him, than millions to a Rothschild. To the poor wretch, who has but one friend—that one friend is the whole world.

Is death terrible to the good man? Why should it not be so to the bad man, who is wholly unprepared? Was ever a universalist any surer of happiness hereafter, than are most orthodox believers? And yet, they are in no hurry to die. And the best of mankind cling to life—whatever may be their experience, or preparation; and are unwilling to die, if it could be helped, or to go to Heaven before they are sent for. And this, being a beautiful, though mysterious instinct of our nature, apart from the award of our consciences, we cannot hope to quench, or overcome.

And now, suppose the people of Sodom and Gomorrah had been as much better than their neighbors, as we have good reason to believe they were worse, would not such a death—a death of unutterable horror by suffocation—have been very terrible?

Suppose they had all been of our faith, and accustomed to pray thus—‘from battle, and murder, and sudden death, good Lord deliver us!’ would the taking of them away, instantaneously, from our wicked and sinful world to Heaven, be regarded by themselves, or by others that loved them, as the ‘*greatest possible kindness*’? If so—why pray to be delivered? Why sorrow for the separation?

And if you say, that death is always to be shunned; that God himself has implanted the wholesome fear of death in all our natures, and that we are to sorrow with a godly sorrow, and nothing more—over the departed—

then you acknowledge the argument, if argument it may be called, from Sodom and Gomorrah, to be worthless; for, if to the righteous, death would be unwelcome, and a death of such unutterable horror, a sore calamity, why does it not follow, that the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah were visited, and most awfully punished, by the hot displeasure of Almighty God, *on earth*, even though they went forthwith 'from this sinful world to Heaven'?

How a reasonable creature could be satisfied with such an argument against Universalism, I cannot understand; unless, to be sure, upon the supposition that brother Knight had been converted, without knowing it.

And as little am I satisfied with such reasoning, on the other side, as we have here. It is to be found in a paper entitled, 'Endless Misery *vs.* Future Probation', which appeared in the Practical Christian, published by the Hopedale Community, March 12, 1852. The writer is what they call a Restorationist, as I myself was but the other day, under the name of a Universalist.

'Must we necessarily conclude, because there is no "intimation," in certain passages, to the contrary, that the Infinite Creator will say to His finite creature, at *any* period of his existence—"Now, you never shall be holy, never shall find redemption; but you shall continue to *sin*, and continue to *suffer* eternally, and all your tears of penitence, and all your cries for mercy, and all your desires for goodness and heaven, shall be unavailing; and I will henceforth laugh at your fears, and mock at your calamities, as they come rushing with perpetually increasing numbers and force upon you; and torment

and torture you forever to the extent of my omnipotent power?" Must we necessarily conclude that *such* will be the doom of all who go to their graves impenitent, simply because they are threatened with "destruction," or "burning," or punishment under some other form, and there is no "*intimation*" in that specific threatening, that they shall not be *compelled* to revel in iniquity, and writhe and howl in anguish through interminable ages? Horrible idea!—shocking blasphemy!

'When Elisha, the prophet, once expressed his fears to Hazael, that he, on becoming King of Syria, would bring certain evils and cruelties upon the children of Israel, Hazael replied: "What! is thy servant a *dog*, that he should do this great thing?" And were the Almighty to speak in our language, to those who charge it upon Him that he will spend an eternity, in cursing, and crushing, and tormenting His offspring, I doubt not, that, in a similar spirit to Hazael's, though infinitely holier, He would say: "What! is thy Maker a *DEMON* that He should thus dishonor and debase Himself before His whole Creation?" And those who attribute to Him such cruelty would be the greatest sinners in the universe, did they not do it ignorantly, and through the influence of a wrong religious education. As it is, it is one of the greatest *wrongs* they can do to God; and they can do nothing more effectually to cause men to rebel against Him.'

Here the writer—a very honest, well-meaning man, I dare say; and I am the more ready to believe this, from having had nearly the same views myself—as I have said

before—though not for the same reasons, and I know that I was honest, has really answered himself, without intending to do so.

Observe. Hazaël says to the Prophet who warns him of the future, ‘What! is thy servant a dog, that he should do this great thing?’ He did not believe the word therefore.

Nevertheless, he did that very thing!

And how happened this? Like the multitudes round about us, he had a theory of his own—a hope of his own; faith in himself, though he had no faith in the prophet. And what was the result? He did the very thing he believed it to be impossible for him ever to do!

And *therefore*, why may not the Lord God omnipotent hereafter do, just what this bold questioner believes, and for just such reasons, to be impossible for him to do?

But further. Let us look into other reasonings, founded—honestly enough no doubt—upon the belief of the writer. He forgets, as I did, that we are to have no other gods, but the Hebrew God—Jehovah—as revealed to us in the Scripture; that we are to build up no gods for ourselves—either of silver, or gold, the commonest of our idols—or of earth, or clay—we are to worship no shadowless creatures, within the secret places of our own hearts. Of these very scriptures, he says, ‘They teach that “the Lord is good unto all, and that his tender mercies are over all his works”;—that “God is Love”; that “He doth not willingly afflict, nor grieve the children of men”; that “He delighteth in mercy, and hath no pleasure in the death of the wicked”; that

“He chastens us for our profit”; that “He will not contend forever, neither be always wroth, lest the spirit should fail before Him and the souls He has made”; that “He is unchangeable, without variableness or the shadow of turning.” In brief, that He is a *Universal Father.*’ But, continues the Practical Christian—

‘ Such was God when he revealed Himself of old ; such is He now, as Opeph, I doubt not, believes. But where is the “*intimation*” that He will not act upon the same principle in the treatment of sin and sinners there that He does here ? An Apostle says: “whether we live, or whether we die, we are the Lord’s”—His children, He our Father, the Father of all still. If He *loves* the wicked here, He *loves* them there ; if He *pities* them here, He *pities* them there ; if He punishes them to subdue and reform them here, so He does there ; and if here He forgives, accepts, and blesses the penitent, the same He will also do there ; and forever, as now, seek the holiness and happiness of all His intelligent offspring. These positions are Scriptural, resting upon even the *letter* of the Bible ; and no man can believe this world to be the only state of probation, without denying the *immutability* of God, and making Him fickle and changeable like man. “THE LORD IS GOOD UNTO ALL.”

- Does Opeph believe this ? He professes to. “HE IS OF ONE MIND AND NONE CAN TURN HIM.” Does he believe this also ! If he does, he cannot, by any moral possibility, believe that this is “the only day of grace.” And what a strange notion it is, that our exchanging worlds, if we are unregenerate, changes God and all His purposes concerning us !—changes the *unchangeable* God !’

Now—if unchangeable, in the sense here contended for, God must never do anything for the first time: whatever is, must continue forever; unchanged—unchangeable.

The idiot must be always an idiot, here and hereafter: the Laplander always a Laplander: the pagan—the Idolater—the cannibal—the lunatic—the rich and the poor—just what they are now, and always have been! All probation here would be a pitiable and hopeless failure—and probation hereafter, though never intimated—nor shadowed forth, in the dark sayings of priest or prophet, apostle or martyr, God or the Saviour—but on the contrary always declared *not to be*—since, as the tree falleth, so it lieth, and ‘there is no work nor device in the grave’—all the probation they were ever fitted for.

Thus much for samples of what I must continue to find fault with, in the reasonings, or temper, of controversial sectarians, however conscientious they may be, under all other circumstances.

And now for what weighed with me for many years, and so heavily, as to hinder all further investigation; for I held it to be not only undesirable, but dangerous, to go further; and that upon such questions, the sooner our minds are made up, and settled forever, and unchangeably, the better for us, both here and hereafter. A long continued controversy with ourselves, upon questions about which honest, clear-headed, patient men differ so widely, appeared so unprofitable, that I preferred ‘a little more sleep and a little more slumber’, as at least the safer, if not the wiser course.

My proposition was, that God will never punish *for-*

ever, even the most abandoned, incorrigible, and wicked of his creatures: and for the following reasons.

1. Because, being a God of infinite wisdom, and power, and of infinite mercy and compassion, and therefore 'seeing the end from the beginning,' he would not have created Man, as he did, in his own image, to everlasting dishonor—nor, indeed, anything, to be everlasting wretched.

2. Being no respecter of persons, and infinitely just, and therefore impartial, he would not suffer such perpetual distinctions to prevail.

3. Because the wicked are his enemies, and God is Love: And the whole errand of the Saviour was to show that God loves his enemies—for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son for it—and that we must love our enemies, and pray for them, and forgive them, and do good to them here, and if possible hereafter, and not evil; for the injunction is all-comprehensive and perpetual! Love your enemies! and bless them that curse you! And it cannot be supposed that the infinite Jehovah would teach one thing, and practise another.

4. Because the Bible teaches clearly, that '*all the ends of the earth are to be saved*'; and that Christ died for *all*.

5. And because in Acts iii: 19, 20, and elsewhere, we have passages like the following. 'And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the Heaven must receive, until the times of the *restitution of all things*, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets, since the world began'.

6. And because eternal death—or suffering—is not so clearly taught in the scriptures, as to be adapted to all understandings—else would it be impossible for honest men to arrive at different conclusions. They never disagree about murder, adultery, or thieving, covetousness, or lying—and why should they differ about everlasting death, if it were plainly taught?

Such—however plausible, or however empty and frivolous, they may appear—were the reasonings, in substance, that walled me about, as with triple brass, for many a long year, and kept me from all wandering and all misgiving, and, of course, from all further investigation: till I was wakened, as by a thunder-peal, without even desiring it, and against my own will.

But having now stated my objections—honestly and clearly, let me try to answer them, as honestly, and *as* clearly.

Answer 1. If it be true, that because the Scriptures do not clearly teach eternal death, or suffering; or *because* they do not so clearly teach it, as to convince all mankind, it were better to lay the scriptures aside, and reason for ourselves without their help, then it follows, that the scriptures are worthless, and ought never to be appealed to, where men disagree; but only, where all mankind are precisely of the same opinion.

Answer 2. That God is a being of infinite Love and compassion; and that he sees the end from the beginning; that he is no respecter of persons, and impartial—after his own way, and not after man's way—nobody that believes in a God, or hopes in a God, will deny. But what then? Is he not also a God of infinite justice and

truth? And if these attributes are irreconcilable—or do not coincide—must they not neutralize each other? And then what is there left of God himself?

And supposing it were otherwise, and that certain infinite properties, overpower other infinite properties, who shall say which of the two must prevail—justice or mercy, for example—and when and where? Infinite, inexorable justice—or the infinite mercy that endureth forever—boundless love, and pity, and compassion, all alike infinite?

If we apply this very reasoning to all that we know, and see, and hear, of God's dealings with the sons of men, will it bring us a single step nearer the result?

God *may* do to the living here, all that we say he cannot, and will not, do to the dead hereafter, because he is no respecter of persons—and impartial; and this, age after age he does, to whole generations and races of men; and yet, who is there to charge him with folly, under the name of partiality?

Let us not be cheated by words. To talk about the *impartiality* of a Being, who doeth his pleasure alike in Heaven and Earth—who says he will have mercy upon whom he *will* have mercy—that some of the children of men, like the potter's vessels, are made to honor, and some to dishonor; and who proves it every hour, in all his dealings with mankind from the first—and whom we dare not charge with partiality, or injustice, do what he may—is no better than wilful blindness, in the use of language, or downright hallucination.

What know we of almighty God, but by and through the Scriptures, which, as we do not understand them

alike, we are to put aside for the present—may it not be forever!—or through his works upon earth, and among mankind?

Now, that God, as a matter of simple truth, and within the knowledge of all mankind, not only distinguishes between man and man, but between whole nations and races, age after age, is not to be gainsaid. Some live and die in thick darkness—others, in slavery—others are pagans and Idolaters—for thousands of years—man-worshippers or devil-worshippers, from the first; others are in sorrow and want, in grief and terror; others are blind, or deaf, or helpless, or dwarfed, or unsightly and loathsome—others idiotic, or distracted, childless, or otherwise cut off from the fellowship and the consolations of life.

And all this, be it remembered, while others live in the enjoyment of all that earth can yield—of tall and stately proportions—developed alike in body and mind—magnificent and shapely—endowed with health and strength, and understanding, and with the capability of indefinite—perhaps of infinite progression.

Is God *partial* here? Is he *unjust* here? Is he a *respecter of persons* here? If the answer be *no*, then, all these differences may be continued hereafter, and the poor Laplander may dwell in the darkness of a frozen sky, while the negro swelters underneath the tropical heats of another world, forever and ever, while the favored Caucasian varieties, and the long-enlightened, flourish forever and ever, without any impeachment of God's justice, or *impartiality*.

But perhaps, to avoid this uncomfortable conclusion,

you bow your head reverentially to what cannot be denied—the facts about you from the beginning—and admit that God is partial—or in other words, that he not only may do, but does continually, what if he were an earthly Father, in parcelling out a rich inheritance among his children, would be called both unjust and partial—according to the received use of language.

Be it so. Then you admit one of two things, from which there is no escape: either, that when we speak of the Supreme Lawgiver, who may qualify, repeal or change what we suppose to be his own laws at pleasure—else he would not be supreme—and we must go one step higher ‘to find out God to perfection’—we cannot charge him with partiality or injustice, do what he may; nor even for doing what in man would be properly so called: or that, by the original constitution of his nature, as the uncreated, the everlasting and the unchangeable—he is, or may be, under certain conditions, both unjust and partial. And in either case, what becomes of your argument and your hope as a Universalist?

You have appealed to analogy, and the answer of analogy is clearly against you.

You turn away from the Scriptures, and appeal to experience: but experience answers, and you are overwhelmed.

You summon this world for a witness against the other world: Here to testify against Hereafter—And lo! their answer!

All that we know of God, come that knowledge whence it may, shows clearly that he is always consistent with himself: that he is unchangeable in fact—however

changeable he may appear ; and that therefore he will continue to do, hereafter, what he has done heretofore.

Consequently, if some are happy, and others wretched, here—some greatly privileged—and others greatly disqualified—it may be so hereafter, be the causes, or consequences, what they may.

3. But we are commanded to love our enemies, and to do good to them that wrong us—and *therefore*, you say, God must do the same—and that, forever and ever, and not, as we see that he does now, and here, sending his rain alike upon the just and the unjust, and his richest blessings upon the evil and the good—but always, and forever.

But are there no limits to this command ? Judge for yourself. And is God obliged to do anything, merely because we are commanded to do it ? Whom shall He worship and serve, to justify us in our worship and service !

If you answer that there are no limits to the command —then the dark treacherous analogy you depend upon would make it obligatory upon Jehovah to do one of two things—to love all his enemies, though they should continue to be his enemies forever and ever ; to love them, and minister to them, notwithstanding their banishment to the world of wo, which would not help the Universalist—since he might share in *such* love, and be none the happier ; or to continue to forgive, and bless and restore them, though they should continue to make war upon Him, forever and ever, even in his very presence-chamber, and round about his throne.

Would not this be loving his enemies *better* than his friends? rebels better than martyrs? the worst of all his creatures more than the best? Where then would be what is called the recompense of the just?—if no distinctions were made but such as would necessarily tend to the encouragement of disobedience?

And if distinctions were made in favor of the just—there is an end of the whole question; for who shall say where such distinctions are to stop—or to begin—perhaps on earth—perhaps above—whether now and here, or only hereafter?

And, as well might you argue that God must do whatever he commands us to do—and be whatever he commands us to be—submissive and obedient, for example; or that God must and will do, of course, whatever he may require of us to do—and He, being of infinite wisdom and power, there should be no suffering, no sick, no blind, no naked, among all his creatures, and certainly not among all his enemies.

You are commanded to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, to comfort the afflicted—all of whom are sufferers by God's appointment. But God can do all this without your help; and if his enemies were special favorites, would be likely to do all this, without your help. But does he?

If not, then that law given to us by the Saviour was intended for the creature, and not for the Creator: for Man, and not for God; since, if it were obligatory upon God, there should be no suffering, no sorrow, neither want nor sickness, neither hunger nor nakedness, among his enemies, whatever there might be among his friends.

If the law be for us, according to our ability; and if you infer that, because He requires anything of us, therefore He will do it himself, and must continue to do it hereafter, then there would be no poor, no blind, no miserable upon earth—his power being unlimited.

But such there are. The poor we have always among us. And therefore, the law is for Man, and not for God.

Objections 4, 5, and 6, are not worth answering separately. That Christ died for *all*, is admitted—that all the ends of the earth are called—and that if they obey the call of Him who says, ‘Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth’—they will be saved, is clear—but that the restoration of all things, whatever else it may mean, means this, I deny.

Finally: That honest men do sometimes differ, must be acknowledged, and—constituted as we are—no two alike in all the earth—and no man forever the same, but changeable, there seems to be no help for it, even with the Bible before them. Where they do not, and cannot agree, therefore, what are they to do? Cast aside the Bible, and trust to Nature with her dark revealings, and her dismal intimations? That were hardly safe upon such a question.

Or shall they gather together all the passages that seem to justify the hope of the Universalist, like those already mentioned—and turn away from all that appear to condemn that hope; or diligently collect and compare all the testimony, and look about for illustration, into the dealings of God here, with ourselves, and with others; and then, with prayer and lowliness, await

God's revelation of the truth? What sayest thou, my brother?

That sinners are the special favorites of God, I acknowledge. Christ came to save sinners—the *lost* sheep of the house of Israel. Sinners were all created but a little lower than the Angels; but when restored, who shall say what sinners may not become hereafter? To which of God's Angels hath He said 'Thou shalt have all things in subjection'? Are we not all sinners—and always? and is there not more rejoicing in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just persons—'Angels it may be'—who need no repentance? It was for the spendthrift and prodigal, that the fatted calf was killed, and the robe and the ring brought forth; and not for the son who had never gone astray; for he had never so much as a kid given to him to make merry with. It was the lost lamb, the Good Shepherd left his whole flock to go after; the one piece of silver that was lost, which led to a forgetfulness of all the other eleven pieces. But what then? Are these indulgences and exceptions to continue forever? If so, what are the Heavens above to be peopled with?

God is to be judged of—here and hereafter—by his manifestations here: and not by our childish notions of what we call justice. The sun's brightness being but God's shadow—what can we ever know of him but through such insupportable manifestations? He may have, and in fact must have reasons, and always the best of reasons, for whatever he does—reasons which we are wholly *incapable* of understanding, or even of guessing out—*else he were not God.*

But there can be no such thing with the infinite Jehovah as what we call reasoning—or ratiocination—and yet; where there are many ways, he must always choose the best, and his reasons, if we like to call them so, must be unchangeable, instantaneous election.

But however many good ways there may be, to bring about a given result, with God himself, as with man, everywhere and at all times, there can be but one *best* way; and *therefore*, all the differences, hardships, inequalities and seeming contradictions which we see here, may, and probably will, continue hereafter, and perhaps for the same reasons; for some are to be the *least*, and others *greatest*, in the kingdom above; and as ‘one star differs from another in glory’, so ‘in our Father’s House are many mansions’—and if it were not so, he would have told us; and some ‘are, and must be, greater than the rest.’

And as no two human beings were ever so much alike, that one conscience would do for both—or one trial—or one judgment, analogy, the clearest and loftiest, would justify the expectation of differences in rank, and power, and usefulness, among the Hierarchy above: and who shall say how vast, how boundless—to be perpetuated forever and ever? It may be that we are to begin hereafter, just where we leave off here. Will you not, my brother, take up the subject anew, and reconsider all these questionings of the spirit?

You will. But when? And why not now? Why delay for a single hour? Forward or back you must go, in the journey of life. You cannot stand still. Day by

day you are multiplying your transgressions, and, of course, enlarging your accountability—day by day, you are receiving, without paying. Where will this end?

One argument more, which occurs to me, may be worth a passing word. It may be stated briefly thus.

God, being infinitely wise and powerful, must foresee, and could prevent, if he would, all transgression. Therefore, he cannot seriously mean to punish forever the helpless children of men, for carrying out his predetermined work—for ‘offences must needs be’. If there were no sin, there would be no suffering; and if there were no suffering, there would be no temptation—no trial—no patience—no resignation—no self-denial—no sympathy—no virtue. Sin, therefore, is a part of God’s system—like pestilence, famine, war and earthquake—&c. &c.

In other words God is the author of whatever happens, which he could prevent if he would—and *therefore*, he will not punish *forever*?

But why punish at all?—in this world or the next? for a single day, or for all eternity? The reason would make it as unjust for God to suffer an hour’s pain to follow any transgression, as it would be to afflict man with everlasting punishment. Why do we suffer at all here? Why are the sins of the fathers visited upon the children—poverty—intemperance—evil-habits—or bad character? Why does fire burn—or water drown—or poison kill—or halters throttle? As they always follow certain acts, not always transgressions, why does not our Heavenly Father, who might if he would, prevent such

acts, interpose to save the children of men, his agents and ministers, from the consequences?

But suppose we apply this very reasoning to Man himself, in his dealing with his fellow-man. The proposition is, that, inasmuch as God has the power, and might, if he pleased, prevent all transgressions, *therefore* he will not punish the transgressor—meaning, in other, and less round-about phraseology, that God himself is answerable, and not man, for the transgressions of man; and that, *therefore*, He cannot justly punish man at all, in this world, or the next.

Great questions are involved here—but if we admit the premises—God's power—what then? Does it follow that God will not punish the transgressor, *hereafter*, and *forever*, because he might, if he would, have prevented the transgression? How is it with Man?

Most crimes might be prevented, perhaps, by shooting, or hanging, or imprisoning for life, all dangerous or suspected persons—and all who are convicted of a first offence. We, the People, have the power, and failing to exercise the power, if such persons are suffered to go at large, or even to live, therefore, we must be answerable for their transgressions—and they are not to be punished!

If this be bad reasoning with Man—how dare we make use of it with God?

But enough—you are in the morning of life—you are perhaps fifteen or twenty, or in the strength of manhood or womanhood; or in old age—three-score and ten, perhaps, or even older.

But whether old or young, I pray you stop a moment

and look at the question before you. The population of the World is about one thousand millions. And these die out, upon the average of human life, in thirty years. If you are fifteen years of age, therefore, you have outlived between four hundred, and five hundred millions, of human beings, who have gone to judgment, since you began to breathe the breath of life. Are you thirty? You have outlived, and buried, eight hundred, or a thousand millions; if sixty, nearly two thousand millions; if seventy-five, *two thousand five hundred millions of men, women and children!*

And wherefore? Why should you have been spared, where so many have perished? What have you done, to deserve this? What are you now doing, that your exception should continue?

And if you answer *nothing*—then why hope for a change hereafter, *not* in correspondence with what you see here? And why complain of God's election, for any purpose, either here or hereafter?

But you are bowed to the very earth, it may be, with a sense of unworthiness, and utter helplessness. So much the better. Without this, there would be no hope for you.

You are afraid to come out openly perhaps, and take upon yourself the obligations of a Believer. *Afraid!* Are you quite sure? Have you not mistaken the word? Are you not rather *ashamed* to do so?

You may not be able to live up to what is required of a professor. Granted—and what of that? Who is? None do, and you are not likely to be better than the

best man that ever lived. A wholesome and proper fear—and greatly to be encouraged—but what then?

Do you grow better by delay? Or do you hope to overcome that very fear, which is the groundwork of your hope, provided it does not hinder your taking the first step, and the last. Will it be diminished, by waiting and reasoning with yourself? by withstanding the pressure you sometimes feel? by becoming better acquainted with the Bible, with yourself, or with God?

You go to Christ, my poor mistaken Brother, not because you are worthy, but because you are unworthy; and the more unworthy you are, the more welcome—Shall we then *delay*, that grace may abound?—‘God forbid!’ saith Paul.

Christ came to save the lost; to call, not the righteous, but sinners to repentance; to heal the sick—for the whole need no physician.

Are you not sick? Then do you need no physician. Are you righteous? Then may you put back his outstretched hands, without danger. If righteous, you have no need of a Saviour—no business with him—a Saviour could not help you,

But, after all, how do you propose to make yourself more worthy?—or less unworthy? By further delay? Are you, of yourself, able to fulfil the law, and the whole law? If not, are you not increasing the hardship you complain of, with every breath you draw? Are you not growing older—hardening your heart, by withstanding the suggestions and solicitations of the Holy Spirit? Be assured, my friend, whether young or old, nigh at hand

or afar off, whatever does not soften the heart, never fails to harden it. Have you not found it so? I appeal to you; and leave you to answer the question to yourself, and here, as you will answer it hereafter, and to another.

All obstacles, overcome, are helps. The accumulated strength, and tumultuous heaving, of the gathered waters in a spring freshet are augmented by the very barriers they sweep away. And so with every kind of ineffectual opposition. By yielding, we help to crush ourselves. By withstanding, the foundations of our strength are sometimes revealed, both to ourselves and to others.

Nor is it sunshine that we always need—or a lamp that never pales nor flickers. We need mystery, as we do revelation; darkness, as we do light. By day, we must have the cloud—by night, the pillar of fire, through all our wanderings; in life, death—in death, life, to hold us to our allegiance, and make us watchful, to the end.

Judge for thyself, O thou that questionest the Uncreated, the Almighty, the Unchangeable, and the Everlasting, as if he were bound to answer thee, not with

‘Blasts of unseen trumpets long and loud
Swelled by the breath of whirlwinds’—

but as a man pleadeth, face to face, with a brother. Judge for thyself!—but be merciful in thy judgment. Be not of those, who, like the newly couched for a cataract, look at one thing, and see another—or see all things alike, and all at the same distance, mistaking

both their magnitude and their worth, for want of knowledge and experience.

One word more. If you knew you were to die this night, would you like to be found just where you now are ? I do not say, occupied as you now are, for no man living would answer that question with a *yes* : and if all mankind were to live as they would, if they knew that they should hear the words, this very day—‘Thou fool ! this night thy soul shall be required of thee’, the business of the world would instantly stop forever—there would be an end of the nations; for however much we might desire to do all our duty—nevertheless, we should certainly fail. The near approach of death would paralyse, though it should not altogether disqualify, nor frighten : I do not ask, therefore, if you would like to be found employed as you now are—at this very moment —by the dread messenger : but whether you would like to be found no better prepared than you are now ?

If you knew you were to live a whole year, a month, or a week, would you delay any further preparation, up to the very last hour ? But being unassured—knowing not how near you the Angel of Death may now be standing—nor whether you will be suffered to finish what you are now saying or doing, you delay ! Blind and presumptuous man ! Whither goest thou ! Hearest thou not the thunders of the cataract—the challenging of them that are set along the borders of the great gulf, and calling to one another hour after hour, ‘Watchman ! What of the night !’

Farewell ! Bright messengers are hurrying between Earth and Heaven, it may be with our every breath—

and like the great ships of the ocean—the flying shuttles that weave, as with a web of iron, overshot with gold—the warp and woof that bind all the nations of Earth together—it may be that they are only for a season, and that if we mistake a message, or a signal, or turn away from the swift messenger in his upward flight—we lose our passage—and forever!

FAREWELL!

ALMIGHTY GOD !

JEHOVAH ! FATHER ! FRIEND !

ALMIGHTY God ! The thunders of the Deep,
Tumbling in darkness o'er the unbuilt Skies,
Before the Firmament was lighted up,
With self-sustaining anthems, or the stars
Flamed forth to music, or the Host of Heaven
Rolled chiming on, were prophecy and prayer !
One everlasting dirge ! The Universe,
Unshaped and fathomless, lay there unquenched ;
Heaving with prodigies and portentous throes.
There lay the buried Future ! There the World !
Archangels, Thrones and Histories ! Life and Death !
And there the Pharaohs and the Ptolemies,
Conquerors and Kings ! The Priesthood of the Sky !
The Cherubim and Seraphim ! And there,
Assyria, Egypt, Babylon the Great !
Dominion, Power and Glory ! Rome and Greece !
The dread Hereafter ! Nineveh and Tyre !
And all the giant shadows that have stalked,
Age after age, along the trembling earth,
Sceptred and crowned, the Phantoms of a day !
Prophets and Bards and awful Shapes of power,

Interpreters of God ! But where was Man !
Where the unsceptred Multitude ! and where
The starry legend that blazed forth, on high,
Along the crowded battlements of Heaven,
With shoutings of great joy, when he appeared,
Our ELDER BROTHER ! fashioned like ourselves,
Though mightiest among the Sons of God ;
The loftiest image of Almighty Power !

JEHOVAH ! Jah ! The Terrible and Just !
God of the Hebrews ! Darkness!—Mystery!—Power !
Unsearchable ! What knew the giant race,
Who saw thy shadow in the midnight sky,
Thy footstep in the earthquake ! While they heard
The roar of mountains smoking at thy touch ;
The trumpetings of Darkness round about :
The thunderings of the Sea ; and with their arms
Uplifted, as in prayer, together rushed
Upon the nations headlong——led by THEE,
The GOD OF BATTLES ! Oversweeping thrones,
And scattering Empires, like the desert sand,
With garments rolled in blood : About thy throne
Ten thousand times ten thousand awful shapes,
In their tempestuous brightness pealing forth,
Forever and forever, Alleluiah !
To thee, the Builder of the Universe !
O, what knew they of Thee, UNSEARCHABLE !

ANCIENT OF DAYS ! The everlasting ONE !
Thy Prophets gathering on the mountain-tops,

And holding back the curtains of the sky,
While Patriarchs—Portents—and Prodigies,
Kingdoms and Powers, and all the Pomp of earth,
Nation by Nation, waking into life,
Came slowly up, and looming to the stars,
Went slowly by—diminishing to naught,
Saw but the shadow of the King of Kings,
And overlooked the FATHER ; while they bowed
Before the great I AM, and heard the rush,
Of His ten thousand chariots, and the sweep
Of mighty Angels, who excel in strength,
A huge beleaguering Host, on outstretched wings,
And all a-blaze with worship and with love.
But lo ! the earthquake and the fiery storm,
The tempest and the shadow passed away ;
A gentle whisper followed, and a voice—
A FATHER's voice—came sounding through the dark
Of countless ages, and the Universe
Took breath again ; and overflowing hearts
Grew loud with thankfulness, and hope, and faith,
And all the creatures of the teeming Earth,
The very beasts that perish, and the Seas,
And overhanging Skies, and stormy Winds,
The little buds, and flowers, the sounding air,
The lion's whelp and raven, while the stars
Rolled chiming on, as ever from the first,
Acknowledged God the Father, and lived on,
Rejoicing in their strength, and happiness.

And then our ELDER BROTHER—he appeared !
Friend of the lowliest that walk the earth !

Friend of the mightiest that sway the skies !
Friend of the sorrowing and the faithful few,
The broken-hearted that lie down to die,
The myriad poor, the suckling, and the babe,
The fatherless and widow—Friend of all !

Thou that hast fashioned this great World of ours,
Peopling our hearts with nations ; weaving here
Into a web of fellowship and love,
The golden warp and woof, set thick with stars
That make all nations one—forever one.

Thou that givest forth, forever and forever,
Seed time and harvest, and the early rain,
Comfort and hope, and all that strengthens Life,
And all that weakens Death—Almighty Friend !

Help us ! O help us, that we turn to Thee !
And, overwhelmed with thankfulness, appeal,
With him that called thee, Father ! and ourselves,
Co-heirs with him, thine own Beloved Son,
To that prodigious Love, that kindled MAN,—

After the stars were cast—the seraphim—
And all the glorious Hierarchy of Heaven—
Of giant dust, to sanctify our hope :

To that prodigious Power that gave to him,
As he leaped forth, dominion o'er a World,
Self-multiplying to the end of time ;
And in the high companionship of her

That nestled near his heart—a glimpse of Heaven ;
And in the little children flowering here,
The seedling cherubim of upper worlds.

O, let us turn to thee ! ALMIGHTY GOD !
JEHOVAH !—FATHER !—FRIEND ! to thee alone !

Remembering our lineage and our hope--
And though dishonored, while dishonoring thee,
Still counted there among the Sons of God !
O, help us Father ! and forgive Mankind !
That they should be so wondrous weak and blind !

HINTS FOR MEDITATION.

1. As Masters are judged of by their servants, so are Gods by their worshippers. Let the declared followers of Jesus Christ never forget this.
2. We are always preaching the Gospel, or something worse.
3. Hume's great argument. Because we know by experience that men lie, while we know nothing of miracles by experience—*therefore* miracles are impossible. But, we have more experience of Man's truth, ten thousand times over, than of his lying. Truth is the rule; and falsehood the exception—or what would become of the world? If there were not, even among the most untruthful, much more of truth than of untruth; and if we did not believe them, notwithstanding their untruthfulness, much more than we disbelieve them, the business of the world would stop: governments would be no more; all the associations of life would be broken up; there would be no friendship, no sympathy, no love: no one would be willing to trust another, and our very children might die in our laps of starvation, because of our unbelief.
4. We are always least sensible of our greatest deficiencies.

5. Salvation through love. A child is at the window of a house on fire, at midnight. He hears the voice of his father calling to him through the darkness below, and telling him to leap. He cannot see his father; but he knows the voice, and believes in it. He leaps; and finds himself in his father's arms. The salvation here is through love.

6. But there may be salvation through fear. Another child, the only son of his father, clammers up the main shrouds of a large frigate, unobserved, till he is seen standing on the very truck, balancing himself to the easy sway of the long, light spar, as the ship rises and settles along her path. His father is in command. Called suddenly to the deck, he sees at once the peril of his boy—not a moment is to be lost—no mortal arm can reach him—calling for his rifle, he commands the poor child to leap into the sea, or he will send a bullet through him. The boy knows his father, and having faith in him, obeys. He leaps into the sea, and comes to himself at last, on the bosom of his father. Here we have salvation by fear, and through fear—and yet, love alone without faith, like fear alone without faith—unflinching and hearty faith—would have been utterly powerless. Both stories are supposed to be true; and are well worth employing for illustration, and encouragement.

7. The more we do, the more we may; and the more sensible we are of our short-comings.

8. But for transgression, there would be little or no suffering. And but for suffering, bereavement, sorrow, temptation and trial, what chance would there be for the

growth of the Christian virtues? What need have the untroubled, the untempted and the untried, of patience, or submission, or hopefulness, or trust, or help? Only the weary know what rest is—only the famishing, what the bread of life is. Without transgression, what should we know of the happiness that comes *only* of restoration and forgiveness? To understand what help is, we must need help; or what consolation or comfort is, we must be troubled. “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted:” who suffers most, *may*, therefore, enjoy most.

If it should turn out hereafter, that more happiness than suffering has come of transgression, to the Moral Universe—more of good, than of evil—just as mankind enjoy more than they suffer from hunger—what then? Will it not be just what we are bound to believe may be the case, from what we already know of God’s character? And who shall say this cannot be? *Must* it not be, if God is God? Among the unrevealed mysteries of his administration there must be, forever and ever, some which cannot be understood by us, till we, ourselves, are Gods—nor even then, unless there be no God wiser than ourselves. As well try to explain the Principia of Newton, the vortices of Descartes, the wonders[”] of La Place, or the Novum Organon of Bacon, to the suckling in its mother’s lap; as any of these great mysteries to the Unbeliever, or even to the Believer, so that he shall fully understand them.

9. The more of any Christian grace we have, the more we *want*. As with power, and wealth, and fame, so with poorness of spirit, with meekness, and patience, and

lowliness, and love—"Increase of appetite doth grow by what it feeds on."

I do not say, the more of any Christian grace we have, the more we *need*; for the very opposite would be true; and the less we have, the more we need: but the more we have, the more we desire, the more we want, and long for; because, the more we have, the less we value it, and the more we feel our deficiencies.

10. Prayer. God may prescribe his own conditions, whether he threaten or promise. And he may publish, or withhold those conditions. With Nineveh, and with Hezekiah, did the Unchangeable change? If we go deeper, we may find that when he threatened both, he did not publish the conditions, in advance—that Jonah and Isaiah were not allowed to "declare the whole counsel of God," beforehand; or in other words, the terms upon which Nineveh might be spared, and Hezekiah's life prolonged. If Jehovah appears to change, therefore, is it not safer to believe that such apparent change was provided for, from the beginning, by some unpublished condition—as that of prayer.

11. God's love to his creatures. Fire and water are governed by laws that allow of no exceptions, and spare nobody—not even little children, however innocent and helpless. The little child, sorely tempted, stretches forth its hands to seize a butterfly, or to snatch a flower, and tumbles into the sea, or the fire. These laws are unchangeable. The great transgressor and the poor babe suffer alike when they are violated, whether wilfully or otherwise. Did we know nothing of these elements—

fire and water—and were we told of babies perishing for their innocent transgressions—what should we think of the law? And what of the Lawgiver—if guided by our natural instincts? Yet who questions the goodness of God, because of such laws, and such consequences? To the Unbeliever this may be a revolting mystery. “But”, says Lord Bacon, “by how much any divine mystery is revolting and incredible, so much the more honor do I render to God in believing it. And so much nobler is the victory of faith.”

12. Another mystery. Of king Saul it is said, 1 Sam. x: 9, “God gave him another heart”, and he prophesied. But afterwards, “the spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord troubled him.” 1 Sam. xvi: 14. And then the spirit of Samuel prophesied to his face—and the awful catastrophe followed—and he and his whole house were left unburied upon Gilboa. And wherefore? Because “To obey is better than sacrifice.” 1 Sam. xv: 22.

13. All thy works praise thee. The Heavens declare thy glory, and so do the Earth and the Sea, and every insect and flower and shell, and every drop of dew: and the very beasts that perish—for they are all alike incapable of dishonoring Thee or disobeying Thee. But how is it with Man? How with the higher intelligences, if higher there be of original nature, among them that are to “judge Angels”? For he and they, of all the creatures of God, are capable of dishonoring themselves and Him. Hence their prerogative and their accountability.

12. How many Christians are, after all, only apostate Heathen.

13. But the age of miracles is past. Indeed! what is conversion but a miracle, and perhaps the greatest of miracles? God only can work the wonder. The blind see—the deaf hear—the lame walk—unclean spirits are cast out—and the dead are raised; the “dead in trespasses and sins.” And yet forsooth, here is no miracle: though as great as any of the miracles wrought by the Saviour in person.

14. Why does not God oblige us to be saved? Why not “compel us to come in” to the marriage supper? Why not so deal with us, and so wall us about against temptation, that we cannot go astray? For much the same reason that influences parents, when they leave their dear children at liberty, instead of locking them up, or putting them to bed, or tying them hand and foot, lest they may be tempted beyond their strength. If we could not disobey—our obedience would be only that of the stars in their courses, instead of being what it may be, worship and homage.

“They that seek me early shall find me”—and they that seek me late I shall find. Is it not so? And is not the reason clear? The aged have no time to lose, and God meets them half way, as it were. Both hurry—the Holy Spirit and the sorrowing transgressor—as the time grows shorter; else what hope were there for them that have only time to cry “Help Lord! or we perish!”

15. How can we know that we love Christ—with no bondage to try us—no imprisonment—no stripes—

no disqualifications—no reproach—no death at the stake, or otherwise? How can we satisfy ourselves—or others? Ask the little child if she loves her father? If he has never needed her help; if she has never been called upon for self-denial or sacrifice; if she has never known suffering nor want, for the sake of that father, how can she be sure that she would bear it? how can she be sure of her love, as she might, had she been so tried? And how shall others be satisfied? By her obedience—obedience being “better than sacrifice.” “If ye *love* me, keep my commandments.” “If a man *love* me, he will keep my words.”

16. It is good to be afflicted. “Sweet are the uses of adversity.” A child is “beaten with many stripes” by a loving father. How does he bear it? Is he drawn closer to that father’s heart? Does he long but all the more to touch that father’s hand? Here lies the proof. Were the child required to suffer a painful surgical operation, he would want his father to *use the knife*, and his mother to hold him perhaps. Why the difference, under any sort of trial, or affliction? Because of unbelief. Did we believe many stripes, and sore trial, to be as necessary and wholesome, as a surgical operation, we should be always brought closer to our Heavenly Father.

In a word, if we are drawn nearer to God by affliction and trial, we love; otherwise, we love not. We receive the stripes, be they many or few, unthankfully, though submissively. But why should we, any more than we do the knife in the surgical operation? “The flesh will quiver where the pincers tear”—but if our faith be steadfast, and our love serene, the spirit is untroubled.

Instead of glorying in our tribulation; instead of remembering that before we were afflicted we went astray; instead of remembering that whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, we doubt the kind purposes of our Heavenly Father. But when we are called upon to part with our right hand, or to pluck out the right eye, having the opinion of a competent earthly judge, we no longer doubt or question the wisdom or propriety of the sacrifice. We believe—and belief is but another phase of love.

17. Because we are uncertain: because we are not sure of drawing another breath—what a reason for shutting our eyes, and stopping our ears, and folding our arms, and leaving the rest with God!

18. Faith, Hope and Charity. In the great work before us, Faith may do much—Hope more—but that Charity which “never faileth”—faileth never.

19. Thorough reformation can only be brought about by a change of heart, by a change of appetite, by a change of the understanding, or by some other change, which makes transgression impossible.

20. When afflicted, call to mind your blessings. When you meet with losses, count up what you have left. “Look not upon your own things, but upon the things of others”—that is, upon the sorrows, and afflictions, and trials of others, and not dwell so much on your own.

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